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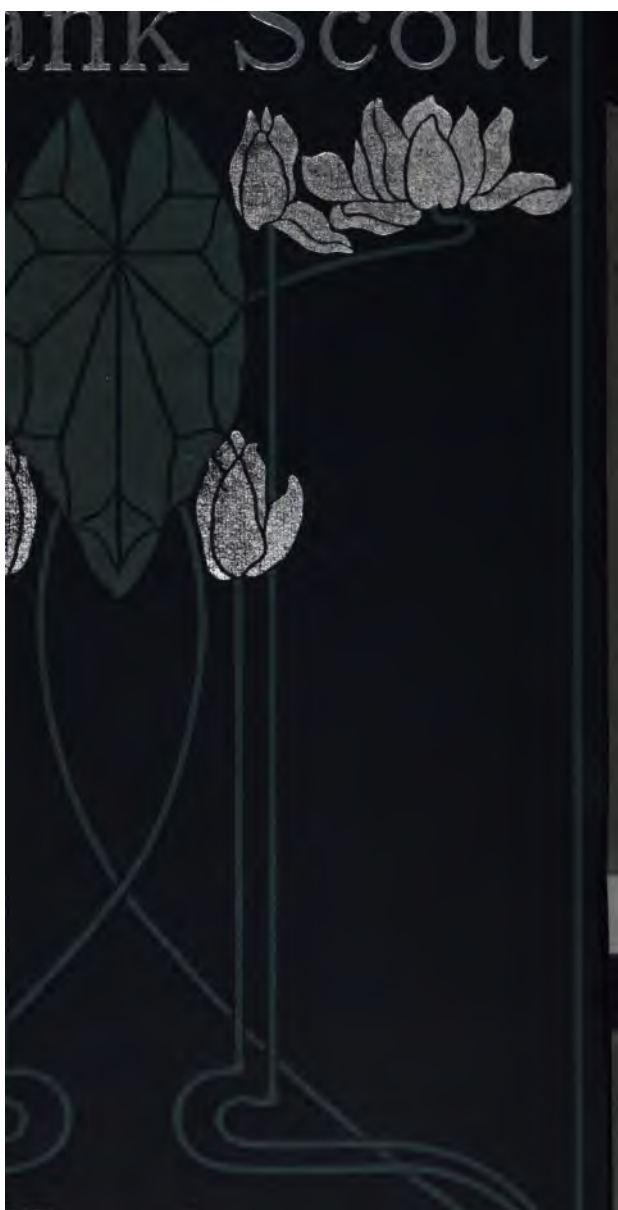
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# The Dishonor of Frank Scott

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By M. Hamilton <sup>psend</sup>

[Mrs. Churchill Luck]



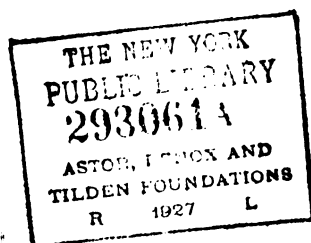
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## **The Dishonor of Frank Scott**





## PROLOGUE

**I**T was Frank Fetherston-Scott's brother, not his father, who was the Lord Barking people remember. It is well to say this, as the difference of age between the two brothers was so great that confusion has often arisen.

Probably not a dozen people remember Frank's father, who lived at home on his comfortable property, and was known as "The good-natured Earl." The phrase almost presents Lord Barking as in a picture.

The elder brother was less good natured, as Frank found to his cost, and much cleverer. He was beginning to be spoken of as a most promising young member of the House, when his father's death from a fall in the hunting field translated him, much to his disgust, to the House of Lords. Later on, it will be remembered, he became a member of the Cabinet, and it was said he would have risen higher still had not his death, at forty-five, made way for the present Lord Barking.

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He has nothing whatever to do with Frank's story, which neither he, nor the half-dozen brothers that came between, ever knew much about.

People said that Frank Scott owed the pleasant things that fell to his lot much to his having a brother so well known, but in truth he owed them more to his charming manners and handsome face.

In these days few people remember him, and no one speaks a good word for him, least of all his own people.

The two who know the truth cannot but have a bitter memory of him, and indeed the evil he wrought them was very great, and not to be forgotten or forgiven.

But the many, who only saw the thing from the outside, give their blame, not for the wrong he did, of which they know nothing, but for his atonement, which was heavy, and yet seemed to them, not knowing, heartlessness gross and inexcusable.

Frank's natural inclination was to take life easily and pleasantly, without thought of the future, and certainly with no shadow of tragedy hanging over him.

In the summer of 1899, on his return from six months' leave to his post of A.D.C. to Sir John Cooke in the Punjab, he was the most light-hearted, popular, healthily conceited boy in the world, full of sheer enjoyment of living, with no memory of a wakeful night, or an anxiety.

The only rebuff he had ever had in his life was

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at twenty, when he had asked a lady several years his senior to marry him, and she had declined, alleging as a reason the impossibility of thinking seriously of a man whom every one called "Fluffy."

He was five years older now, but every one called him "Fluffy" still.

He was very popular; nobody was so helpful, so kind-hearted, so ready.

He had telegraphed all over the place for ice when a quartermaster's child had scarlet fever, and had sat up for nights with a subaltern dying of typhoid; almost every one owed some kindness to him.

And in return people stood a good many things from him.

He had a pair of the most seductive blue eyes in the world, with long, curly eyelashes, wasted on a man, and perhaps these eyes of his and his air of serene youth helped to make him a privileged person.

He was a good boy on the whole; steady enough, if easily led, good-hearted and a thorough sportsman. Never a trouble had met him in life; certainly he was in debt, but, then, so was everybody else, and what did it matter? When one bank grew troublesome he borrowed from another to satisfy it; when his tailor sent in his bill, he ordered a new pair of riding breeches.

So all went serenely, and Frank sauntered through life, playing polo and racquets, soldiering in the morning and dancing in the evening, and just when

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debts were beginning to get uncomfortably troublesome at home, something had turned up, as it always did, and Sir John Cooke had made him his A.D.C.

The beginning to the tangle came, without originality, from sitting too long with a woman in the moonlight.



In tragic life, God wot,  
No villain need be! passions spin the plot:  
We are betrayed by what is false within.

—GEORGE MEREDITH.



## Part 1





The prince, unable to conceal his pain;  
Gazed on the fair  
Who caused his care,  
And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,  
Sighed and looked, and sighed again.

—DRYDEN.



## CHAPTER

### I

“YOU don’t understand what an awful thing you are going to do,” said he, earnestly.

“*You* don’t understand how desperate I was—and am,” said she, but there was a shaken tone in her voice. In truth, she had not understood. His shocked face, his look of horror and disgust, had come to her as a revelation.

It was a hot evening in the Indian Ocean. The other passengers lay and lounged about in deck chairs, and they two were alone, in a chosen corner where they could catch the only breath of breeze.

“Do you understand,” he said, “what marrying a native means?” He paused and looked at her. “But no, of course you don’t—who does, at Home? It’s considered rather smart there, isn’t it, to have an Indian prince or so on hand? My God! it makes me sick to think of it! And *you*——”



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“ But——” said Barbara Ford, and then stopped and looked at him speechlessly, with white face.

His horror affected her the more as coming from Lord Francis Scott, who took everything easily and found life in general a joke.

It was his absolute light-heartedness and freedom from care which had first attracted a girl who had never had much chance of being light-hearted or careless.

Now his face was full of distressed disgust amounting to agitation.

“ Miss Ford,” he said, “ give it up. Believe me, I know what I am saying. You are preparing Hell for yourself; that’s what it will be. There is not a man or woman in India who will not look upon you with a pity which is near to insult, as a disgraced outcast. They don’t understand at Home, but out here we understand. If—if you belonged to me, I would rather see you dead.”

Barbara Ford stood with bent head. Unconsciously she was grasping the side of the ship with a force that hurt her. It seemed the only firm thing left in the world.

She had been, on the whole, so satisfied with her fate. She had looked upon it as a fine thing and an opening for ambition, even more than as an escape from the dreary drudgery of a dancing mistress’ life at home. People had been interested, even envious. From being “Only the assistant, Miss Ford,” she had become rather a romantic per-

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sonage, and unconsciously she had found the immediate increase of importance reassurance for any vague doubts.

She had refused the man once, sending an acceptance after him a week later in a moment of intense depression at the dreariness and hopelessness of her lot in life. His absence had softened all which made acceptance difficult; in the excitement of it she had paused to look no misgivings in the face, and she had been happy.

"It is not too late," said he.

"It is too late."

"But," said he, "why? I put aside the possibility of your caring—that is out of the question. Why wreck yourself, body and soul—you who are beautiful enough to marry any one?"

Barbara smiled faintly. She had not found her handsome face do much for her in a life which made avoidance of mankind necessary, a life of work, and hard work, all day, and dull evenings. She was without the time, had she had the inclination, to make friends of women; to make friends of men would have meant to lose the means of a respectable livelihood. Her life had been the life of many thousands of girls placed as she was, but that had not made it any easier for Barbara, to whom it had not come naturally.

The holiday, the first complete holiday of her life, had been on this ship, and Frank Scott had been the most light-hearted of holiday companions. Barbara

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had not known there was anybody so light-hearted in the world.

Till this evening she could scarcely have believed he could be in earnest about anything.

"Look here, Lord Francis," she said, "I don't know how it concerns you, but understand if you like. If I give it up, what shall I have left to me? I have no money, I have no way of getting back to England, and if I did get back, what could I do? My place is filled; I should have to begin again. If I give it up it means starvation or such drudgery as you don't dream of; I am speaking absolutely literally—I have no choice left."

He made no answer. He stood, looking down into the moonlit water, compressing his lips tightly under his growing mustache.

"Despise me as much as you like," said Barbara passionately; "you urge me to give up all that I have, and you offer me nothing to replace it!"

Frank Scott turned abruptly away and left her standing alone.

It was beyond endurance; words leaped to his lips which must not get themselves said. It was such a horrible sacrifice, and he could do nothing to prevent it.

Next day they would reach Bombay, and they would part, and this girl would go on her way to do this hideous thing, and sink year by year as any woman must sink. And he could do nothing.

Lying on deck that night, he found sleep difficult

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for the first time in the twenty-five years of his life.

He lay on his back, looking up at the moon-lit sky, with Miss Ford's dark, handsome face blotting it out.

She was just the sort of girl he admired, so independent, so animated, such a splendid girl—and she was to be sacrificed body and soul to a beastly native. A girl with whom he had talked and laughed through many an idle hour of the voyage, with whom he had walked the deck when it was cool, and sat in a corner when it was hot; a girl to whom he had confided most of the events of his uneventful life with a frank egotism which was attractive in its youthfulness.

He had told her most things about himself, and she had told him nothing, nothing till this evening.

It was outrageous, horrible——! It could not be permitted, no man could stand aside and allow it—and yet, what could he do?

Frank lay and looked into the sky with a puzzled frown on his careless face.

She was right; he wanted to take away all she had, and in its place he offered her—and could offer her—nothing.



A man must nedes love maugre his hed,  
He may not fleen it though he should be ded.

—CHAUCER.



## CHAPTER

### II

“DON’T say any more; indeed, it is no use—  
and it’s so early in the morning,” said Barbara.

“I wasn’t going to say any more,” said Frank,  
“only this. We get into Bombay before breakfast,  
in less than an hour. Does that mean that in less  
than an hour I must say good-by to you?”

“But, Lord Francis——”

“I mean—is anybody coming to meet you?”

Frank’s face was rather white; so unused was he  
to a night without sleep, that it left its traces.

Barbara, in her blue serge dress and sailor hat,  
seemed beautiful to him. She was a handsome girl,  
tall and dark, with eyes that looked black some-  
times, and a high, broad forehead promising a  
cleverness she did not possess. Perhaps her mouth,  
with its soft, red lips, which she had an odd trick of  
compressing together, gave a truer index to the  
character of this impulsive and most unhappy girl.

People said, on the ship, that Miss Ford had made

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up her mind to marry Frank Scott from the first. Perhaps there was some truth in it; at any rate, it was Fluffy himself now, and neither his rank, nor the wealth she took for granted, that kept her by his side. And she knew he did not mean to marry her.

Poor Barbara was not very proud; her feelings were no secret to the most careless observer.

At Frank's question a slow red grew in her cheeks and she turned away nervously.

"*He* isn't coming," she said.

"Do you mean to say," said Frank, unreasonably angry at hearing what he had hoped to hear, "that the"—he suppressed scoundrel with an effort—"the man doesn't even take the trouble of meeting you?"

"He is a doctor," said Barbara, "and he can't get away. He is sending a friend of his."

"And he stays at home to boast of having deceived an English girl into marrying him, and sends some fat baboo to meet you," said Frank, quite unreasonably and cruelly. He felt ashamed of himself when Barbara asked him with quivering lips what was the use of saying such things to her?

"It's no use," Frank said; "I hurt you like a coward, because it hurts me so. This is what I wanted to ask, Miss Ford. Your train doesn't start till this evening. Will you help me to escape the baboo, and give me a whole long, happy day to remember?"

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There was nothing wrong about it. He had told himself so a dozen times. It would harm nobody, not even the native doctor in Calcutta, who would never know. It was so easy to make a mistake in the meeting of two people who did not know each other.

And Barbara Ford should go on by the evening train, none the worse for one day's happiness.

"Oh—," she said, with a long-drawn breath.

"It will be quite easy to get off in such a crowded ship. You have only to come with me at once, and I will see about your luggage afterward. I only ask you for one day—only twelve hours," said Frank, and it did not occur to Barbara to inquire what right he had to ask for anything.

"We will forget there is anybody else in the world," he pleaded. "You will do it, won't you, *Barbara?* I think Barbara is the sweetest name in the world," said this young man, honestly believing that he had always preferred it to all others, "and I have been longing to call you Barbara ever since I knew it was your name. And now you have agreed, I may call you Barbara for to-day, mayn't I?" Then he laughed, suddenly and boyishly.

"You see, I have said it as often as I could, in case you don't let me say it again," he added, "but I know you will."

And of course Barbara did.

In all things Frank had his way.

In the early morning they wandered through the

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Bombay streets, and he bought Barbara books and provisions for her journey, and a few silver prettinesses, which he implored her, with those seductive blue eyes of his, full of entreaty, not to be cruel enough to refuse. Through the hottest part of the day they lay in long chairs in the veranda of Watson's hotel, utterly heedless of the curious looks of their fellow-passengers; in the evening they drove round the bay, they two alone together, as they had been throughout all this wonderful day.

"It has been a perfect day," said Barbara, "the happiest in my whole life."

She leaned back in the carriage, and the quick fading softness of an Indian twilight added darkness to her dark eyes and beauty to her handsome face.

Frank gazed at her, his heart in his eyes.

"The happiest?" he said.

"I haven't had so many happy. But this—this will always be like a bit of heaven to think about."

"And you who can enjoy like that—you are going to cut yourself off from all chance of happiness," Frank said; "Miss Ford, is this to be your last as well as your first happy day? Listen to me, for your own sake, Barbara—for *my* sake."

"For yours! What is it to you—after to-day is over, what am I to you?"

Frank was leaning forward, his hand on her hand, his eyes in hers.

Following her hot words came a pause, a pause



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because the only words that would have been an answer did not come.

Slowly he loosened his grasp of her hand and let it go, and slowly he drew back in his seat.

At last he said :

"I know—I mean I have no right to speak ; but in memory of to-day——"

He paused again, feeling the inadequacy of his words.

"You have no right whatever," said Barbara in a flash of reproachful defiance ; "nobody has a right to speak to me so but the man who will be my husband."

And still Frank said nothing.

The glamour of the warm, dusky evening was upon them both ; the long day together had left the rest of the world outside and dreamlike. The effort it cost Frank Scott, who had never denied himself anything before, to keep words unsaid which sprang to his lips was so great that his fair, careless face grew white.

It was such a mad, strange, sweet day ; a day without past or future, when every minute was to be grudged as making the end nearer.

The end of the drive brought the end of all things very near.

They had dinner together at the station, but the happiness was over, and the strain between them was so great that they scarcely spoke.

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Between heat and excitement neither of them could eat.

Frank's eyes, full of unwonted pain and passion, sought Barbara's, and she leaned back in her seat and fanned herself, looking straight before her unseeingly.

It did not occur to her to make any effort to conceal her feelings.

"It is half-past eight," he said; "we had better go."

In dead silence she got up, and they walked down the platform together.

There were a good many people going by train, and a good many others who had come to see the last of their friends.

Some fellow-passengers from the ship were there, also a nervous and unmistakably bridal couple, escorted by a selection of relatives; a fat English civilian, surrounded by a crowd of baboos, bearing farewell wreaths and bouquets; and innumerable natives of a lower status, packing themselves sardine-like into uninviting third-class carriages.

But in the "Ladies Only" Barbara's luggage still retained undisputed possession, and Frank gloomily congratulated her upon it.

He got into the carriage after her, and began to arrange things as he thought best for her comfort.

"I've pulled out the seat on this side," he said; "you had better sleep here; you'll get less dust."

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"Very well."

"And remember, it will turn cold in the night. I've brought my rug; it's a warm one."

"I don't want to take yours. I have plenty."

"I've put your own underneath. And I couldn't let you go without bedding. I can get more, and it doesn't matter. I've unstrapped it for you, and you'll find sheets and blankets—better than nothing, anyway, if they aren't very grand."

"But, Lord Francis—it's impossible—I can't take everything."

"You've taken more than a rug or two," said Frank roughly.

Barbara Ford sat down and began to pull off her gloves without knowing what she was doing. Frank moved restlessly about the carriage, altering the position of first one package and then another.

"I hope you will have the carriage to yourself," he said after a pause.

She made no answer.

There was another pause. The bustle outside was broken by the signal bell, which meant five minutes more.

Barbara turned her head, and sat steadily looking out of the farthest window at nothing.

The gay voices of the bridal party floated in; the civilian, gorgeous with flowers, had entered his carriage.

"I must go," said Frank.

Barbara, her face turned away, made no answer.

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"Won't you say good-by to me?"

His voice was hoarse with repression.

"Barbara!" he said.

She turned her face. She was crying bitterly.

"It—it is so hot," she said feebly.

But before the words were well said Frank's arms were round her, his hot kisses on her cheek, her lips, her hair.

"My own darling," he said, "my darling, how I love you!"

A native or two passed the window and looked in, but neither Barbara nor Frank knew or cared. The few moments left to them were moments of absolute forgetfulness of everything but each other.

Then Barbara said in a sort of cry: "They are shutting the doors; the train is going!" and Frank awoke to the outside world.

"Come," he said roughly, "get out. I can't let you go on."

"Yes, I can't go—I can't!" said Barbara, clinging to him.

There was none too much time. Frank jumped down on the low Indian platform as the train actually began to move.

"Quick, my arms are waiting for you!" he said.

Slowly the train moved out of the station.

The bridal group stood there in their light dresses, waving farewells, and natives, in twos and threes, straggled past, hand in hand.

Nobody took any notice of Frank and Barbara,

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who stood close together, looking after the train as it vanished into the darkness.

“And all my luggage has gone on,” said Barbara with a sob of excitement.



"A great many difficulties arise from falling in love with the wrong person."—RUSKIN.



## CHAPTER

### III

AT Government House, Rahore, everybody was having tea.

There always were a good many people there for tea, and indeed at all times. It was whispered that Sir John and Lady Cooke were not fond of being alone, and took care to avoid it; and a good many people knew and gossiped about the reason, which was fairly public property.

Sir John Cooke was a tall, thin man, narrow-shouldered, with a long face and a high forehead, puckered into a perpetual frown. He was never a popular governor, but there are a good many people in India who now remember him with pity mixed with a distinctly friendly feeling. He was not naturally sociable; he came to talk to his guests at stated times, in the same spirit in which he attended meetings and gave away prizes. He always talked laboriously, transferring his attentions from one guest to another with precision and impartiality.

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Lady Cooke, on the contrary, merely answered when she was spoken to, allowing her part as hostess to slip from her shoulders. She looked frankly indifferent, and the few spontaneous remarks she made were addressed in a half-aside to the Military Secretary, Major Peterson.

She had been a handsome woman, her face spoiled by a receding chin and pallid blue eyes. She dressed badly, even untidily, and was either unconscious of it or indifferent.

"And Lord Francis Scott comes back this afternoon?" said Mrs. Moore, a civilian's wife, casting about for something to say, in a stilted conversation with the governor.

"His train is due now," Sir John said.

"I hope he's quite strong again?"

"He says England has entirely removed any remnants of his indisposition. Lord Francis is naturally very strong. The children are delighted at the prospect of his arrival."

"Of course; they and Lady Cooke have come out to you since he left."

"But they naturally have seen much of him at home, now and at other times. Pray excuse me, Mrs. Moore; I have not had the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. Lochart. Pray remember me to Mr. Moore, and say how much I regret not having had the pleasure of his company this afternoon."

Sir John passed on with a grave bow.

Mrs. Moore, like most people, felt a certain strain

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removed, in the necessity of trying to keep up to Sir John's extreme politeness.

She heard him, with relief, begin to ask Mrs. Lochart in her turn severally for each member of her family at home and in India, forgetting nobody.

Sir John never forgot people's relations or mixed them up; he had a private book in which family connections were carefully noted, with a place for remarks over the page, and he wrote it up methodically.

Mrs. Lochart, being young and frivolous, found the ceremonious succession, following precedence, in which Sir John's conversation was vouchsafed to one guest after another, and the stereotyped family inquiries too much for her gravity, and shook with suppressed laughter; but as neither Sir John nor Lady Cooke were the least likely to remark it, it did not matter.

When she had, in her turn, inquired for the Cooke family, Lord Francis's name succeeded naturally.

"The most perfect of A.D.C.'s," she said, careful not to let slip the "Fluffy" which came more naturally than his length of name.

The most perfect of A.D.C.'s followed his name by a minute or two.

The glamour of a week of intense happiness was still upon Frank, but a faint misgiving had begun to touch him coldly.

It brought the slightest suggestion of artificiality



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into his charming manner, so slight that no one noticed he was not quite his old happy-go-lucky self.

Everybody was glad to see him, and Fluffy, as usual, was delighted to see every one, and returned each greeting he received as if his present and future happiness was entirely wrapped up in the person he addressed. It was this, coupled with his real good-nature and absolute want of self-consciousness, that was Fluffy's great charm.

But when, after dinner that evening, Major Peterson went to the drawing-room, leaving Frank and his chief alone together, Fluffy faced difficult words to be spoken; words twice as difficult as they had seemed when Barbara's dark eyes were looking into his and Sir John Cooke was far away.

"So you've got old Peter in Malcolmson's place, sir," he said, staving off the evil hour; it was so unpleasant, so intensely unpleasant to Fluffy to hurt any one.

"It's a temporary arrangement, and not very satisfactory—to me," Sir John said.

"I shouldn't think it would be," said Fluffy; "Peter is a good soul, but he's a silly old oolu now, isn't he, sir?"

"Major Peterson is a trifle eccentric."

"I should think he is! He's the man who used to order 'coughing parade' till the General stopped it. Said he couldn't stand his men all coughing at odd times—you know how natives do cough—and if they must cough it should be at his word of com-

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mand. And he used to have his bungalow crammed with cats, and make them all sit on chairs round the table at meals and eat out of plates."

Fluffy talked to fill up time, but he was not speaking spontaneously, and a pause came.

How was he going to say it? He opened his mouth to speak, but his words met Sir John's.

"I am particularly glad to have you back again, Frank. In the position you hold toward us—what did you say?"

"Nothing, nothing," said Frank hastily; "you were saying, sir?"

"In the position you hold toward us, I can turn to you as I could to no one else; and things are very difficult, very perplexing," said Sir John, with a heavy sigh.

"I am so very sorry," said Frank.

"Unfortunately you must understand, I know you understand, a little how things are between me and—Lady Cooke," said Sir John. "If it was only myself, and the serious injury to my career—but there are the children. Russell ought not to be at home, he ought to be at school. He is my only son—*now*—and he is being ruined—by his own mother."

Fluffy's blue eyes were full of ready sympathy.

"She brought him out against my wish. I desired and stated that he was not to be indoctrinated into her sect—at his age, with his excitable nature! But she consulted the English head of the Society,

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Sect, what you will, and was informed by this lady that at ten years of age a child was capable of choosing. Her words outweighed mine, and Russell is now an admitted member of Christian Science. Only one thing have I succeeded in putting an end to; on her arrival out here I laid down absolute commands that Lady Cooke was to discontinue the practice of performing cures for remuneration."

The real pain in Sir John's voice was not to be concealed by his lengthy platitudes, and what Frank called his prunes and prisms manner.

"You have borne a great deal, sir," Fluffy said.

"I have borne, I sometimes think, more than I should. When I recollect that this insanity has lasted seven years, and realize how little I knew about it, how little I thought of it! Lady Cooke has had so many fancies, I looked on it as simply one more; and I have been obliged to be away so much all these years. I find I have lost my home and my wife, as well as my boy. Bobby was a fine little chap, Frank, wasn't he?"

"A fine little chap." The sudden simplicity of the words touched Frank more than anything else could have done.

"To think," Sir John went on in a shaken voice, "to think that his mother sat still and let him die. I can't forgive it—I never shall forgive it."

Frank found little to say. Bobby had been a favorite of his, a bright, clever boy, full of animal

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spirits, and diphtheria had ended his happy life very suddenly.

"The illness was severe from the first," he said; "the doctor himself said possibly nothing could have saved him."

"There will always be the doubt. And to sit out here, helpless! You are aware the other children were allowed free access to his room, and that Lady Cooke now holds their escape from contagion as a triumph to her sect, while I can only think of the awful risk—that I have narrowly escaped being a childless man."

There was a long silence, which Frank hesitated to break; he crumbled his bread into small rolls and piled them one on another, a habit of his which always drove Sir John to supreme impatience when he noticed it.

Sir John himself broke silence.

"It is not that I want to bring you into this, my boy. But I want you to understand how I am placed. There is Violet to consider."

Frank suddenly sat bolt upright, and his little bread pyramids tumbled in ruins.

"Sir John," he said, "I have been wanting to speak to you; I must speak."

"Let me say a word or two more first. You have heard from Violet lately?"

Frank was crimson.

"I must have missed her letters at Bombay," he

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said, guiltily conscious that they lay there uncalled for.

"Then you don't know that she will be with us in a fortnight? Yes. I see from your face that you realize that this is not altogether happy news. Australia has not suited her, and now she has been ordered away from the summer heat there. We have tried so many climates for Violet."

It was well—or was it ill?—that Sir John had not stopped at the first sentence.

Frank's fair, boyish face had turned from red to white and back again to red. His ready tongue for once failed him.

"It is hard on you, my boy; this illness of Violet's has been a hard trial. I do not give up hope. Her whole affections—her life, I may say—is centred in you, and the constant companionship with you may do much. I have said what I have said that you may understand I wish her to be with you as much as possible, and as little with her mother. This will be easier for you to manage than for me. God knows it is hard on us all—on you, too, my poor boy—and I may be doing wrong. Forgive me if I am sacrificing you to what I know to be the one chance for Violet."

His pause was an opportunity for Frank, but words would not come. The one chance for Violet—must he take away her one chance?

He moistened his dry lips, and tried to speak once or twice before words came.

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"I can't—I can't marry her," he said hoarsely.

It was almost inevitable that Sir John, full of his own thoughts, should misunderstand him.

"Yes, Frank, that must be faced," he said; "it may be that Violet will be taken from us, that it is not for her to be any man's wife. Perhaps I ought to separate you instead of encouraging you to be together, but I know it is the only hope for her, and forgive me if I do not hesitate between the risk of spoiling a year or two of your life, and the certainty of breaking my daughter's heart and losing her."

Frank drew a long breath.

"Is she so much worse?" he asked.

"I tell you I don't give up hope," said Sir John.

Frank sat absolutely silent. He had made the effort and it had failed, and how could he say the words he ought to say now? How could he be so brutal as to take away the last hope for Violet?

"I can never marry your daughter; don't count on me to save her. I have won her love, but my own love is given to another woman."

The words turned and twisted themselves through his head, but he knew he could not say them now. Perhaps to-morrow—to-morrow it might not seem so absolutely brutal.

If Violet was going to die? Pretty, sweet little Violet, that he had been so fond of—that he *was* so fond of. There might be no question of marriage, probably never would be, and if there were, it would be when she was stronger and more able to

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

bear a shock. If Barbara and he could only have waited!

It might kill Violet—her father had said so. And yet he could not think of her as dying—pretty little Violet, such a bright, gay little thing, before influenza at its worst had left her always delicate lungs badly affected.

But she was to Barbara “as moonlight to sunlight, as water to wine!”

The blood raced through Frank’s veins as he thought of his beautiful Barbara, and that ecstatic week. No, he did not, he could not, regret anything.

Barbara had been at his mercy; she had given herself with generous confidence and love to him, and he had not failed her. She was a wife for any man to be proud of, and proud of her he was—of her beauty—of her love.

It would all come straight somehow, his boyish philosophy argued; Frank had great faith in things coming straight.

Even Sir John roused from his gloomy thoughts to become aware of his companion’s most unusual silence.



On regarde toutes choses au travers d'un voile doré qui les rend brillantes et légères. Peu à peu, ce voile s'épaissit en avançant, jusqu'à ce qu'il devienne à peu près noir.—NAPOLEON.



## CHAPTER

### IV

**I**T would be impossible to imagine a happier person than Barbara, as she sat in her room at Grey's hotel, Rahore, waiting for her husband.

It was a comfortless room enough. Frank had thought it safer not to take her to one of the better hotels, where everybody knew everybody else, and her arrival might be noted and remembered afterward.

Grey's was one of several small, second-rate hotels on the way to the station, and was patronized by Eurasians and railway people, but by nobody likely to know Frank.

For one night, he had told Barbara, it would not matter, and she had radiantly agreed.

Her surroundings were not much to her.

This bare room, with its aggressively pink walls, its shabby and not over-clean durrie, its four bentwood and two deck chairs, and three round tables of decreasing sizes, did just as well to be happy in as



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anywhere else, and happiest of the happy was Barbara.

In her wildest dreams, and some of them had been wild enough, she had never dreamt of anything more delightful, and she could scarcely realise that she was awake, and that it was to her, Barbara Ford, that all these strange things had happened.

Barbara's people were all very respectable. Her uncle, ever since she could remember, had been a dancing and calisthenic master, but her grandfather had been a bank clerk, so they were entitled to consider themselves as having known better days.

Who Barbara's father was nobody knew, or at least nobody said; this had been the one bitterly felt blot on a most respectable family.

Her mother she remembered as a washed-out looking woman with black eyes like her own; she played the piano for the dancing lessons, and spent all her spare time reading novels. Barbara, beginning as soon as she could read, had read them too, and they had helped her to evolve a series of romances about her mysterious father.

In these novels a girl in her position was sure to be discovered in the end to be at least a countess, and Barbara thought she would like to be a countess very much.

Her mother died, and she was sent to a school in the country, where her aunts had been educated, and where most of the girls' were in a rather better position than hers. She lost most of her cockney accent

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

there, and learned not to pronounce her h's with such decision—none of the Fords ever dropped them; they were most particular in avoiding such a vulgarity.

Barbara did not forget her dreams, but years went on and the romance was a long time coming, while her every-day life was of the dreariest description.

The Fords never forgot that they had known better days. They considered the acquaintances within their reach "vulgar," and would not associate with them, and they were too proud to ask the few that were left of their old friends to their house in their poverty.

It is a fall to become a dancing master when one's father was a bank clerk.

So Barbara never went out except with her uncle and aunt to help with the dancing or calisthenic classes, and never saw anybody outside her family except the children who came to learn.

A girl's home was the proper place for her, and her uncle and aunt did not approve of too much amusement for young people, even had the circumstances of Barbara's birth not made them particularly strict with her. They did their duty, but they never could bring themselves to like the girl whose existence was a disgrace, and Barbara knew it and had many times pictured herself driving in a coroneted carriage to heap coals of fire on their heads.

But it was so long coming! She was twenty-five

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and hopeless when Mr. Mehta Das came into her life.

Her uncle's failing health had culminated in a paralytic stroke which left him helpless, and Mr. Mehta Das was called in to attend him, so it all came about very simply. He was the first young man Barbara had ever known, and she built her usual romances round his dark face and velvety eyes.

Barbara was not clever; she had no resources of her own to fill her mind, she was very lonely, and thanks to her aunt's attendance on the invalid, she was freer. It was delightful to know that somebody counted on seeing her, begged her to meet him, wanted her to marry him—she whom nobody had ever wanted before.

It was not to be wondered at that she eventually grasped at the change held out to her; it was more surprising, indeed, that some race instinct should send him away the first time with a refusal.

It was not till he had left England, and the flatness of life with nothing to think of had come back, not till, owing to her uncle's continued illness, the dancing classes had had to be given up, and she had obtained a post as assistant mistress to the people who had bought the goodwill, not till she found herself looking down a long vista of similar days and years, that she overcame the instinct which had made her refuse him and wrote him the letter he had asked for should she change her mind.

Since then things had all followed each other in

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

exciting succession, including the day when Lord Francis Scott had first spoken to her, with some trivial excuse, across the second-class barrier.

And now she was Lady Francis Fetherston-Scott—or was it Lady Barbara?

What would they say at home—what would her uncle and aunt think?

Lady Barbara sounded very well.

And she might be a countess some day—why not? She disposed of Lord Barking and half a dozen stalwart brothers-in-law quite easily in her thoughts—nothing was too wonderful to happen now.

Lady Barbara Fetherston-Scott—how dignified it sounded.

She could hold her position; Frank should not be ashamed of her; she would look the equal of anybody when she walked in to a dinner or a ball on some lord's arm.

She wondered would Frank come and fetch her to-day in a beautiful carriage with grooms in scarlet, like the one that had come to the station yesterday. Surely she would be asked to stay in Government House; they could not separate husband and wife, and as she was a bride she might go in to dinner that very evening on the Governor's arm—not that he was really so grand as her husband, for he was only a "Sir."

And Frank—Frank was coming that afternoon, and they had been married a week and separated for twenty-four hours.

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She forgot about everything else when she saw him, and threw herself into his arms, and with the love in her eyes other men than Frank would have thought her beautiful.

"My dearest," he said, "my sweetest! Have you missed me, have you been lonely?"

Adding many other foolish things, which came as the breath of life to Barbara, starved for love.

"Do you love me *still*?" said Frank, and the very foolishness of the words warmed her heart.

A little later on he said they must not let the fire go out, and asked Barbara if she had been comfortable.

He had got her a bearer and an English-speaking ayah in Bombay, and the night before, on parting at the station, had charged them both with all sorts of injunctions to take care of the memsahib.

"It is all right," said Barbara, "but I am glad it is only for one night; it frightens me, being alone here."

Frank was leaning back in the most comfortable chair in the room, with his head resting on the best cushion and Barbara on his knee.

At her words he moved uneasily and colored a little.

"You needn't be nervous," he said; "you'll soon get used to it."

"Perhaps I should," said Barbara, "but as it is, what did Sir John say? Has he asked me to go there?"

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Well, the truth is, darling," said Frank, a little uncomfortably, "things haven't gone quite as I meant."

Barbara drew a long breath.

"Is he so angry, then, Frank? You were so sure it would be all right; you were so sure he would be even pleased at the breaking off of the understanding between you and his daughter when he considered her state of health."

Frank received the words in a pause.

It was quite true; he had said so; he had even convinced himself as well as Barbara that he thought so.

"Barbara, darling," he said caressingly, "I was a bit too hopeful. While you were with me I couldn't feel as if anything could go wrong."

"What has gone wrong?" said Barbara.

"It's just that I love you so dearly, sweetheart, that everything smiles when I hold you in my arms."

"But is Sir John so angry then, Frank?"

Fluffy took her hand and began rubbing it softly up and down his cheek.

"To confess the truth, sweetest, I haven't told him yet," he said.

"Frank!" said Barbara, sitting upright.

"Barbara!" said Frank; "you do look so lovely!"

Then he added, after a pause: "You're not vexed with me, are you? You know there is nothing I

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

long for so much as to show everybody the wife I am so proud of."

"But what are we going to do?" said Barbara, with a face of blank disappointment. The dinners, the dresses, the advantages of being Lady Francis Scott—were they all to fade into the distance?

"Darling, don't look like that," Frank said quickly, "I can't bear it, indeed. Do you mind so much, so very much, waiting a few days, perhaps only till to-morrow? I dare say I shall have a chance of telling him to-morrow—I'll *make* a chance. Sweet, forgive me for keeping you waiting a day longer; I meant to tell him yesterday, but he was so miserable; he began to talk of his unhappiness, about Violet and his wife, and—you would have understood if you *had* been there—I *couldn't*. But I will, to-morrow."

"To-morrow," said Barbara, with a sigh of relief.

"Or the day after, at latest."

No use, he thought, in paining Barbara by telling her what Sir John had said about Violet; it was evident their marriage must be declared; neither he nor Barbara could stand anything else.

"Do you think he will be so very angry?" Barbara said.

"Not when he has once seen my darling. He'll see no man could resist such a temptation," said Frank tenderly, "and even if he is—why, if the worst comes to the worst, Barbara, I can chuck the A.D.C. business and take my wife home. I'm not

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sure that won't be best, if I can manage it," he ended thoughtfully.

Barbara was quite happy again. She sat and looked at him, unspeakably blissful in the thought that he was her own, and scarcely caring to take in the sense of what he said, in her happiness that so many sweet words should go to the saying of it.

"I am sorry, darling, that I should have to treat you like this," said Frank, "even for a day or two. But you forgive me—you aren't angry with me for marrying you before I had a home to bring you to?"

There was answer enough in Barbara's shining eyes, had he needed an answer. She told him how happy she was, how happy he had made her, and he laughed and kissed her and was absolutely content.

Last night his false position had troubled him as much as anything ever did trouble Fluffy; it had all been such a very headlong proceeding; if they could only have waited—but then, for Barbara's sake, no waiting had been possible.

He did not repent; he could not, with the memory of that week upon him; he only wished things could have been arranged to please everybody.

But with Barbara there, it was waste of time, it was impossible to think of any one else.

She insisted on his smoking, she drew the most comfortable chair in the room near the fire for him, before he had time to protest, she knelt down to gather the logs together and make them blaze. She looked well, even in the brown coat and skirt they



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had had to buy ready-made in Bombay, which did not fit her.

"It's a pity," she said, "that I have lost all my clothes; there were some pretty dresses."

Frank shook his head decidedly.

"I should have hated you to wear them. I couldn't have let you wear anything that native had paid for. You shall have others."

"They'll be no use to him," said Barbara meditatively, "and it seems a pity."

"Don't think about them," said Frank; "I'm not so poor yet that I can't pay for my wife's clothes. Barbara, my sweetest, promise to think no more, to say no more about that—native. Your letter to him has told him you won't marry him; unless we are very unlucky he need never know more than that, and between us there is no need his name should ever be spoken again. Promise, dearest."

And Fluffy took Barbara's face between his hands and kissed it very carefully in specially selected places, and said he thought it would be nice to have tea.

He did not feel in the least guilty toward the absent doctor. All he felt about it was a faint disgust at the thought that Barbara had ever contemplated such a marriage, and a satisfaction that none of the familiarities of engagement could have passed between them.

That a native should venture to ask a white woman to marry him was so utterly repulsive to

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Fluffy that the idea of his having injured the man never once occurred to him.

He wanted to forget that Barbara had ever been exposed to such an insult.



Tout s'arrange en dinant dans le siècle où  
nous sommes,  
Et c'est par les diners qu'on gouverne les  
hommes.



## CHAPTER

### V

GOVERNMENT HOUSE stood almost in the centre of Rahore, within easy reach of the Mall, the Club, and on the other side, the race-course and polo ground.

The Mall was popularly reputed to be the finest in India, sharing this reputation with a good many other malls, and the public gardens and tennis courts round the Club were always green and fresh, being liberally watered, and in consequence acting as excellent fever-traps.

The compound in which Government House stood was not very large, but it was pretty and well kept. There were always flowers there when there were flowers nowhere else, there were three grass tennis courts, and quite a number of trees.

The house itself was a large, two-storied one, with a balcony, whence hung clusters of purple bouganvillia; at the entrance, in the veranda, two scarlet chupprassies kept guard over the precious book, where such as were worthy in Rahore came to inscribe their names.

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When Lady Cooke was "at home," it was Fluffy's business to be beside the book, ready to escort all and sundry up the wide stone stairway and across the balcony to the drawing-room, which could never be made to look anything but unhome-like.

The study, where Fluffy made out dinner-party lists and searched the Blue Book for exact precedence, was downstairs. When he found himself there, with Sir John, and a list of bigwigs to fit into a succession of dinner-parties and judiciously intermingle with a few of the common herd, it felt almost as if he had never been away.

Only for the difference—the difference that there was Barbara left to a lonely evening, an evening which he and she ought to have had together, which she had a right to feel aggrieved at having to spend alone.

But it was impossible for him to remain with her this first evening when Sir John had specially asked him to return early, and devote his mind to the arrangement of these dinner parties.

In spite of himself, Fluffy's attention wandered, and he could not rival the solemn anxiety his chief bestowed on the matter.

He began to think of Barbara. Things could not go on like this; it was impossible that he and she should remain separated and that she should remain unacknowledged; equally impossible, even did they wish it, that their proceedings could be kept a dead

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secret in a place where everybody knew everybody else's business as well as people did in Rahore.

Fluffy shook his yellow head, and impatiently tried to find a place at table for a couple who seemed to fit in nowhere.

When he declared the marriage he must give up his post as A.D.C., and when he gave it up, what could he do?

Go back to his regiment he could not at present; both his private income and the trifle of his pay must be swallowed up for years in the payment of his debts.

And yet, even did Sir John forgive his rash step—and how could he expect a man who had never done anything impulsive in his life to understand how entirely impulsive this had been—even then he could not stay in Rahore now that Violet was coming.

Surely something would turn up—but it would have to turn up fairly promptly, and Fluffy realized that posts for married men were not always so easy to get.

“Hang it all!” he said under his breath, and found to his disgust that he had seated a lady next her husband, and that the troublesome couple still declined to be placed.

“Fluffy,” said a small voice.

The door had opened a little and a small head, surrounded by a mass of thick, light-brown curls peered in.

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Baby was just four years old. She was very fat and round, with the prettiest little red mouth, and the most innocent, appealing, misleading brown eyes.

"Such a sweet, gentle little girl," people said when they first saw her, finding reason to modify their opinion later on.

"Hullo, Babs!" said Frank with relief; "may she come in, sir?"

Baby's father knew better than to attempt a refusal, and she knew it. She advanced solemnly into the room, and made a very dignified salaam to Sir John, looking like a little angel in her white serge frock.

"Bloodthirsty as ever, Babs?" said Frank; "how many tigers has she killed lately, sir?"

"I killed ten tigers to-day," said Baby casually, "and a lion and six Afridis. I shot them with mine gun, and cutted off their heads, and drove them away in a fitton-gharry."

"I am glad you sent them away," said Frank, "and it was very polite of you to let them have a fitton-gharry. I see Afridis have begun to fall before her gun, sir; it used to be only lions and tigers at home."

"She has got an extraordinary mind," said her father with a sigh.

"I have gotted a little donkey," said Baby serenely, "and yesterday it runned away. It is mine donkey. So I went and I shotted three more Afridis and eated them up."

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Baby! I never could have believed you were a cannibal," said Frank reproachfully.

"It was the donkey eated them up," Baby shamelessly corrected herself.

"She's like what Violet was at her age, but a very different disposition," said her father.

Baby was the only child left to him to take pleasure in, and he found her more than a little alarming.

The overgrown, pallid boy of ten, who presently followed his mother into the room, was chiefly an anxiety.

Lady Cooke had promised to come and help with the dinner parties, and so she came, but she scarcely pretended to any interest.

She said: "Certainly," or "You are quite right," to all Fluffy's suggestions, and "How very awkward," when he explained to her about the husband and wife who would get next to each other; but she obviously did not care in the least either how they sat or what they ate.

Fluffy saw he would have to take all arrangements entirely upon himself, for even Sir John's attention had wandered, and he was looking anxiously at his son.

"Looks paler than when you last saw him, Frank, I'm afraid," he said, with an effort at lightness.

"Russell is perfectly well," said Lady Cooke with asperity. "He understands, as I only wish you did, that he is exempt from sickness and disease, and he is capable of resisting their false claims."

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Russell, looking all bright eyes, assented readily.

"He is a great happiness to me," his mother said, "and he is thoroughly happy himself in knowing the Truth and standing forth among our small band of pioneers in India. I only wish all those dear to me would open their minds to grasp the fundamental truths of Christian Science as this child has done."

Frank had heard it all many times before; his inherent inclination to be obliging had even led him into accompanying Lady Cooke to a meeting, and reading extracts out of "Health and Science;" but it had led him no further.

He was prepared for Baby's little following murmur: "I am a C.S.I. Russell is *not* a C.S.I.; it is mine own self;" and for Russell's indignant flush and his: "Do make her stop, mamma!"

But Baby once started on an idea was not easy to stop; she went on in an imperturbable song: "I am a C.S.I. Russell is *not* a C.S.I.; it is mine own self."

"She means a Christian Science Infant," said Frank, in answer to Sir John's bewildered look; "there's something very special about it, isn't there, Lady Cooke? But, Baby, I don't think you can be a C.S.I., for it says in your mother's book: 'Its beginning will be meek, its growth sturdy;' and though the second thing applies to you, I'm afraid the first doesn't."

"It is mine own self," Baby ended placidly for the fourth time. Whether, at four years old, she



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actually understood she was annoying Russell and did it on purpose, it was impossible to feel sure; Frank was convinced she did.

Russell broke out, with more human wrath in his voice than was permissible to a Christian Scientist :

"It is much better to be an admitted member like me, isn't it, mamma? Please do stop her, mamma, and tell her it is better to be a member."

"If you stop me, I shall roar," said Baby, and everybody felt alarmed, for they knew it was no vain threat.

"Hush, Russell, darling," his mother said, choosing the more cautious part. "If, when your little sister is old enough, she is half as fervent a follower of our Truths as you are, I shall be more than content. This boy never misses his solitary hour for meditation, his mind is open to understand Truths many would think beyond the comprehension of one so young——"

"And I most sincerely wish he was at school in England, without a thought beyond cricket," said Sir John sharply.

Russell, with a little air of excited importance, looked from one parent to the other.

"I could wish, papa," he said, "you understood how unreal such things are."

And there was a comical and entirely unconscious exaggeration of his father's pedantic manner of speech which made it hard for Frank not to laugh.

Sir John himself did not feel inclined to laugh; he

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gave a heavy sigh, and Lady Cooke looked at him triumphantly.

Only Baby was quite unperturbed, and kept on repeating her little rhyme to herself under her breath.

But the entrance of the bearer with the mail was a relief to everybody else.

"A letter for you from Violet," said Sir John to Frank, and Frank took it, crimsoning all over his fair face.

"It must have been sent the week before she started herself, Frank," said Sir John. "Next mail will bring us Violet."

Next mail! Fluffy had not realized it was so near, so terribly near.

He took the letter, turning it round and round and hesitating to open it; it seemed to him he had no right to open it now.

But in the end he opened it; it would not have been Fluffy if the knowledge that his not doing so would have been remarked had not forced his fingers to break the seal.

After all, he and Violet had not been in the habit of writing each other very ardent love letters. This one began: "My Dearest Frank," and touched lightly upon the writer's health and eagerly on the voyage to follow. It only grew earnest in a few last words, saying how her heart and soul were bound up in the thought that they would soon meet.

"I shall get well when I see you, dear boy, I know

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"I shall," she said; "I wonder are you longing for me as much as I am longing for you?"

Fluffy folded up the letter very deliberately, and put it in his pocket, with a set and very unusual expression on his careless face.

But nobody noticed him. Sir John, engrossed in a letter from a Melbourne doctor, read out extracts now and then, half to his wife and half to Frank.

"Not a very good account—far from it," he said; "she is to start the following week, if equal to the voyage—" Fluffy drew a quick breath—"Ah, thank God, she must have started, for he says in the event of her being unable to do so, he will telegraph, and we should have heard long ago. But I am afraid she is in a very low state."

He offered the letter to his wife, but she put it decidedly away from her.

"You know my opinion of doctors," she said; "had I been allowed my way, and it is hard that I am not, with my own daughter, Violet would long before this have realized that sickness and death are false, and only health and goodness and happiness are true. She would long ago have learned to resist these false claims."

It was with a great effort Sir John made no answer. He saw with despair the difficulty with which useless arguments and bickerings between himself and his wife were avoided, even before their children.

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And this illness of Violet's was such a threadbare subject and so intensely painful to both.

Lady Cooke was firmly convinced that were Violet left in her hands all would be well, while Sir John felt equally sure that the excitement of her mother's teachings would be fatal to the girl's overstrained nerves.

And to both of them she was very dear.

When Frank and Lady Cooke were alone, she turned to him with tears in her eyes, and complained bitterly of the pain it gave her not to be allowed to do anything for her daughter.

"If he would only allow me to use the blessings of Christian Science for her help—to give her the grand teaching of Mrs. Eddy in 'Health and Science'!"

Frank could not say he wished it; not even his inherent desire to agree with his companion could make him say this. But he looked sympathetic, and Frank's power of looking sympathetic made Lady Cooke always feel him a possible convert.

"Perhaps some day you won't be against me, Frank," she said. "Do you not realize what a miserable woman I should be, if I had not the great truths of Christian Science to support me? Do you not realize how hard it is for me to feel that Sir John tries as much as possible to come between me and my daughter? In his total want of spiritual discernment he stands between us, and will not let me give her the help that is in my power. I am a recognized healer; I have conquered my own claims, and the

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help that it is in my power to give to others I may not give—to my own child.”

Lady Cooke’s voice broke, and Frank did realize that it was hard. She suffered as well as Sir John—suffered in spite of herself, though her religion proved suffering unreal.

“ I know—I *know* he will not even allow me to go to Bombay to meet Violet. And yet I try to be a good wife to him in the truest sense of the word; I even try to feign an interest in the unreal things that interest him, in the hope that I may in time draw him to those that are real.”

But Frank had for a moment lost the thread of her words; his thoughts were full of this new idea; *some one* would have to meet Violet at Bombay.



Hope is a lover's staff!  
Walk hence with that,  
And manage it against despairing thoughts.



## CHAPTER

### VI

SEVERAL days passed and still Frank was silent. He was very busy. There were a good many people staying in the house and dinner parties every night, while some amusement had to be planned for every day.

Fluffy found his time fully occupied, and this feather-brained young man was even able at times to forget the difficulties he had brought upon himself. But at other times he could not help seeing that every day's silence made his position and Barbara's more impossible, and would make his story harder to tell when it must at last be told.

In the beginning he had taken practically no precautions to prevent his marriage being known. If he had given his father's name and omitted his title, it had been on the impulse of the moment, more to prevent immediate curiosity than with any idea of ultimate concealment. He almost wished sometimes that chance had not stood his friend.

Nevertheless, he waited; there was the possibility

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that Violet might not have started, the possibility that it might be thought better for her to go on to England than to attempt the long journey up country; the possibility, too, which he was ashamed to face, that the voyage might have been too much for her remaining strength.

This was an ugly thought to pass over hastily.

He was not to go and meet Violet in Bombay. Sir John had told him that he himself meant to go, and that it was impossible Frank could be spared to go, too.

With some embarrassment Sir John hinted at his reasons, feeling an apology due to Fluffy, who caught at his escape.

If Sir John went himself, he could reasonably oppose Lady Cooke's doing so; otherwise an endeavor to prevent her would be useless cruelty, and he felt it. At the same time, the idea that her mother's theories would have the worst possible effect on Violet possessed him fully, in a daily increasing uneasiness. And Lady Cooke would certainly decline to take a doctor with her to look after her daughter on the journey.

Frank was very much relieved to find he would not be called upon to meet Violet; intensely relieved, too, by the possibility Sir John often suggested, of sending her on to England to her grandmother in preference to the journey up country and placing her under the influence of her mother, about which his fears were growing exaggerated.

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Fluffy felt her going home would solve all difficulties and make his position possible.

His idea now was to give up his post and declare his marriage after he had left Rahore, as he realized he had made his doing so while there very difficult. But just at present, even were he to resign his post, he could not be spared to leave it, and it would only mean intense awkwardness on all sides, as his resignation, under the circumstances, would be equivalent to an announcement that something was wrong.

But if Violet went home everything was simplified.

All the same, it was not pleasant to part from Barbara every day, and drove him to all sorts of short-lived resolves. It was still less pleasant to meet her and face the same question with the same answer.

In a few days she gave up putting the question into words, but her eyes still asked it, and Fluffy was ashamed.

Would it have been better not to have interfered with her life? He could not think so, and Barbara did not think so either.

And yet her present position was unenviable in the extreme, and if it had not been that her love for Fluffy had swallowed up her ambition, and that this thing that had happened to her was new enough to fill her mind, she would have found it unbearable. Barbara hated sewing; she was neither musical nor artistic, and though she had once been an eager



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reader of novels, she did not care for them, now that she was living a novel of her own.

Fluffy could not spend all day with her, and he could not take her about with him. She could go to the public reading-room certainly, but there was nothing to do when she got there, and it was awkward for her to mix with the people in the hotel in her anomalous position and under the name of Mrs. Francis, which she had adopted on the spur of the moment, in the necessity for a name of some kind.

Once she had gone to watch Frank play polo, but people stared at her, and the discomfort of being unable to speak to him was extreme.

It was lucky for her that her intense happiness was unshaken, and that she was content to sit for hours and think of Frank.

She admired him and adored him. His caressing ways and courteous manners, his happy disposition and very carelessness, his difference from the few men she had known, his handsome face, and a certain halo of his position—all these things appealed to her.

She had seen him once in uniform and found him magnificent, and scarcely less magnificent did he appear in flannels or polo garb. His weakness of purpose, forced on her notice, did not repel her.

Poor Barbara simply bowed down and worshipped and found it pleasant.

There were days when he was completely and absurdly happy, and it was impossible for anybody

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who was with Fluffy when he was happy not to be happy too; but there were also days when an intense depression was upon him, and Barbara had to comfort him by reminding him of his own confident speeches and ready prophecies. Frank was as yet little more than a boy, and very much younger than his years; he was only just beginning to realize the responsibility into which he had rushed. He had taken it upon him with his usual carelessness, but it was sometimes, and only sometimes, beginning to weigh upon him in these last days.

It was on one of these black days, when they had been nearly a fortnight in Rahore, that Barbara at last came fully to understand the position of affairs. Frank had not kept it from her intentionally; it had changed to him with his changing moods, and till she began to understand him it was very hard for her to grasp the truth.

He came in one afternoon with an expression of such utter gloom on his bright face that Barbara, who had parted from him in the highest spirits the day before, thought at first something must have happened.

"No," Frank said, shaking his head, "it's nothing new, darling; it's just I hate this hole-in-the-corner business; I feel I have put you into a false position, and—I don't know what to do."

He went to stand in front of the fireplace and refused to be persuaded to sit down, which in itself showed him unusually perturbed. Barbara

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drew to his side, looking very handsome, if a trifle untidy.

She always did look untidy; she had no more idea of dressing herself than she had of adorning her surroundings, which, consequently, preserved all the bareness of an Indian hotel room. Her clothes never seemed very fresh, and her dresses got a certain air of shabbiness at once; but she looked very handsome all the same, and very loving, and Frank's unhappiness began to soften as he looked at her.

"You see, darling, I am a poor man," he said.

"Poor!" said Barbara, with a little laugh; it seemed to her so very ridiculous that he should call himself poor. "You may think yourself so, but you don't know what poverty means. Look at your ponies——"

"Well, you see, a fellow *must* have ponies out here——"

"And your clothes from a London tailor——"

"Good Lord, sweetheart, you wouldn't have me dressed by a *dirzi*?"

"You don't know what poverty means," Barbara repeated, with a short laugh.

"Don't I, indeed?" said Frank, who was of a different opinion. "As you say, there are the ponies. I have been thinking of advertising them in the *Pioneer*, but the fellows are awfully keen I should play for Rahore at Umballa, and it's rather awkward—and besides, I shall probably sell them twice as

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well after the tournament, you know—we ought to have a fair chance. Rawlinson is good——”

Barbara stopped him very gently and apologetically.

“If you would tell me, dear, how things are exactly,” she said, and Fluffy, who was getting quite happy, was disagreeably recalled from the Umballa tournament.

He began to roll and light a cigarette, which showed he was recovering, and kissed Barbara, and told her she was a darling.

“You see,” he said, “this is where the bother comes in. Before I knew I was going to have the dearest wife in the world, I didn’t bother myself about money. I had £500 a year of my own, but the fellows I knocked about with had a lot more, and the result was, I got into rather a mess. If one goes about with fellows, one must do pretty much as they do, and I didn’t care, for I meant to marry Violet, and her uncle left her a lot of money, you know.”

Barbara did not know; she said nothing, but drew a little closer to Frank and leaned against him.

“Of course, I suppose that wasn’t a very nice way of looking at it,” he said, “but, indeed, I don’t believe I ever bothered about it one way or the other, and just went on borrowing from one bank or another. And then, as things were beginning to get a bit tight, Sir John gave me the offer of coming out here and doing flunkey, and here I am. I just tell

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you, darling, to show that it's not so easy to chuck the appointment and go home."

"I understand," Barbara said, and she was beginning to understand.

"The only thing I can see to do," said Frank, "is to hold on a bit longer and try and get something else. Perhaps Barking could help me; he's a very good chap."

Barbara gave him a look.

"But you must break off your engagement," she said; "do you think it is pleasant for me to think you are engaged to another woman?"

"No, I know," said Frank; "do you think it is pleasant for *me*? But you are a dear, sensible girl, and you understand what an impossible position it is. It's best to wait, Barbara. It's very likely, more likely than not, that Violet goes on to England, instead of stopping at Bombay. I think Sir John is almost sure to settle that"—Fluffy grew more confident of this every minute—"and if so, things are much simpler at once. And if not—why, you know how ill the poor girl is; I shall hardly be allowed to see her. I can't see anything to do but to keep a still tongue for a little longer, I can't really, sweet. It's very hard on you, and on me, too."

"I wish you had told me before," said Barbara.

"What would have been the good, darling? What *could* we have done but what we did? It'll all come straight; don't you be afraid—it is only a matter of time."

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Frank's spirits were returning rapidly. He was very soon consoling Barbara, and proving to her that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

In truth, it was the necessity of composing a letter to meet Violet at Bombay which had that morning reduced him to the extremity of low spirits.

But Barbara could not so quickly regain her serenity; she was the most to be pitied.



"A man's character is like his shadow, which sometimes follows, and sometimes precedes him, and which is occasionally longer, occasionally shorter than he is."



## CHAPTER

### VII

"IF I had known it was going to be *this* sort of a show," said Mrs. Bernard, indignantly, "I would never have come. The idea of asking English ladies and natives together!"

"They do it twice a year. It's supposed to promote good feeling between them and us," said Mrs. Moore, whose husband was a deputy commissioner, and knew.

"And a lot of good it does. Oh, yes, I see your husband is doing his duty, surrounded by fat baboos in purple and fine linen; but does he make any attempt to look as if he liked it? Does he look as if he was talking to fellow-guests and equals? Not he; he is aggressively doing his duty."

"Well, he doesn't look too happy," Mrs. Moore assented, with a laugh.

It was a kind of semi-official garden party, when, once or twice a year, native gentlemen were supposed to be welcomed to Government House, with a view to the promotion of international cordiality.

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The native gentlemen held together in a brilliant group, all purple and scarlet and gold, sprinkled with an occasional gray coat belonging to a judge or a commissioner who was doing his duty, and looked as if he was holding an official reception.

The other English guests kept rigidly apart, in groups of their own. A few officers and girls in smart dresses were playing badminton, and the tennis courts were given up to natives, who looked inappropriate, but did not play badly. One stout youth had showed his enlightenment by taking off his turban and sticking it on one of the posts of the net, with a quaint effect.

"I consider it a poor compliment to be asked to a thing of this sort when I am never asked to anything decent," said Mrs. Bernard; "I'm sure I don't care, and I have no wish to go to their dull dinners, but I think it's not treating my husband fairly. He's much more senior than Captain Lochart, and Mrs. Lochart is always here. And then to be asked to a thing like this, with those St. John creatures, who have no business to be on Government House list at all—it's really most amusing!"

And Mrs. Bernard laughed very angrily. She was conscious of her best frock, only two mails out from home, and felt that it had deserved a better first appearance.

Mrs. Moore, recognizing that they were in a rather isolated seat under a tree, and that short of getting up and leaving her there was no escape just at



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present from Mrs. Bernard, for whom she had no liking, tried to bring the conversation to more agreeable topics.

"Poor Sir John! how he does exhaust himself trying to do his duty to everybody," she said.

"It's better than doing his duty to nobody, like Lady Cooke," said Mrs. Bernard, unsoftened; "look at her; she scarcely takes the trouble to speak to anybody, and the only person she pretends to take the slightest interest in is that stupid Major Peterson. Ah, it was very different in Lady North's time——"

"But then, you know, Lady Cooke is a Christian Scientist."

"And what rubbish that is. They say she wrote to ever so many ladies asking them to come to her meetings. I suppose she did to you?—well, she didn't to me, and glad I am of it, too. I can't think how Lord Francis Scott stands her. He is really very pleasant. He called on me yesterday, and came up at once, just now, to say how sorry he was to find me out. It was very provoking; I had only just told the bearer to put up my box, and, of course, if I had had any idea he was coming——"

Mrs. Moore wondered to herself if Fluffy had seen the box before he paid the call, and allowed her attention to wander, willingly making room for Mrs. Stevenson, who had strolled across the grass to join them. She and Mrs. Bernard were great friends and went out calling together and ran into each other's

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houses at odd hours. Her husband was a gunner and was playing polo, having sent his wife to represent him.

"Do look at the little man in the purple plush coat and the canary turban," said Mrs. Stevenson; "isn't he quaint?"

"I like the grass-green coat best, it's so beautifully embroidered, and such an elephant of a man inside it," said Mrs. Moore.

"That's the Rajah of Mudipur. And look at the little worm of a man with Lord Francis Scott, in what he considers English dress—a frock-coat and a straw hat, and greasy curls to his shoulders—that's the Nawab of Rampur. He's a frightful little scoundrel; there's not a wickedness under the sun he hasn't committed."

"And they ask him here to meet English ladies," Mrs. Bernard said. "Oh, how I do loathe natives, and how I hate India! I say good-by to decent food and decent servants and civilization when I land at Bombay."

"And it isn't as if one lived here cheaply even," Mrs. Stevenson chimed in, "as people think we do, at home. Why, not even the servants are cheap. I pay nearly 200 a month for mine, and I am sure one English maid would be worth the lot of them."

"I am afraid there's the glamour of distance about your memory of English servants," said Mrs. Moore, laughing.

"At any rate, an English servant wouldn't cover

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you with confusion in the middle of a dinner party by planting a tin camp soup-plate in front of you, just because he was annoyed at my cutting him for some things he broke—brute!” said Mrs. Bernard.

“Well, I hope my husband will get promoted into a battery at home,” said Mrs. Stevenson.

“What would you feel like if you were me, with fifteen more years to be stuck here before my husband gets a pension worth taking? Are you going, Mrs. Moore?”

Mrs. Moore said she was, and half way to the tea tent she met Frank, very full of business.

“Do have some tea,” he said; “I’ve got rid of the Rajah and deserve some relaxation.”

“I saw you devoting yourself to his entertainment.”

“I gave him food, I gave him drinks; I did likewise for his suite,” said Fluffy, “and then I said kindly, but firmly: ‘Rajah, I know you want your carriage; come this way, and I’ll call it for you.’ And he came.”

“That’s an excellent way of speeding the parting guest,” said Mrs. Moore.

“Isn’t it? There he goes, as happy as possible, with four horses and fourteen servants, all dressed differently and all dirty. Doesn’t he look regal himself in his frock-coat and straw hat? Sugar and cream, Mrs. Moore?”

“Both,” said Mrs. Moore, “and lots of sugar, to

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soften my temper, after half-an-hour's conversation with that little wasp of a woman, Mrs. Bernard."

Fluffy laughed; he liked Mrs. Moore, and he did not like Mrs. Bernard.

"To hear her abusing Indian servants, while if she was at home she'd be toiling after a maid-of-all-work; and Indian society, when it's the only society she has ever known or ever *will* know! There, I'm as bad as she is, but it does annoy me to hear people who live by India do nothing but abuse it."

"Well," said Fluffy, "I'd better go and see if she and Mrs. Stevenson would like some tea—that may soften them. Good heavens! they have fallen into the clutches of the Baby, and she can't stand either of them. I must go and take her away lest worse befall them. Major, I most unwillingly give up to you the pleasure of looking after Mrs. Moore."

Mrs. Moore's eyes followed him half enviously. What a boy he was, she thought, and how good it was to be so absolutely irresponsible and light-hearted; nothing ever seemed to put him out or worry him.

Certainly Fluffy looked almost as careless as usual, but had she known it, there was anxiety enough in the depths of his heart that day, anxiety he was trying his best to forget as he had always managed to forget before. But it was not easy to forget that Sir John was going to start for Bombay next day.

It would not have increased his comfort had he

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heard the whispered exchange of confidences Baby's appearance had put an end to.

"I've seen him going in once myself," Mrs. Bernard had said. "No, I've never seen her, but Mrs. Bissett, whose bungalow is nearly opposite the hotel, sees her pass very often—a handsome girl."

"But are you sure there's anything wrong?"

"If not, why does she stay at such an hotel? and why isn't she known and asked here? And he goes there very often. Of course, this is in confidence, Mrs. Stevenson; I hate gossip, and I wouldn't spread such a story for the world."

"Of course. But some one ought to give Sir John a hint. And with Lord Francis's fiancée on her way here—it's too disgraceful."

"Men are brutes, my dear—they all are. I am sorry, for I always liked Lord Francis. I suppose one really oughtn't to ask him to one's house."

"There's something so brazen in it. To bring the creature here! Oh, darling, have you come to talk to us?" and Mrs. Stevenson pulled herself up hurriedly and only just in time.

Baby had come up to them, white-frocked, in a large befeathered hat which drowned her rosy little face, and with a huge doll clasped to her heart.

The doll, as a newcomer, was being introduced to everybody, following a suggestion of Fluffy's, and though Baby did not like Mrs. Stevenson, and could not bear Mrs. Bernard, she would not have thought it polite to leave them out.

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"Her name is Victoria Henrietta Frank," she said, "and she can open and shut her eyes."

"But why 'Frank,' darling? Frank is a boy's name, you know," said Mrs. Stevenson.

"Frank, because Fluffy bringed her," said Baby serenely; "but he bringed me a pistol, and I like that much better. Take her, and I'll show you."

And she unceremoniously bundled the doll into Mrs. Bernard's arms, and presented a gaily colored pistol at Mrs. Stevenson.

"I'll shoot you," she said; and it was then that Fluffy saw it was time for him to interfere.

"What an extraordinary toy for a little girl," said Mrs. Stevenson, drawing back; "that's a little boy's toy. Be careful, darling; think how sorry you would be if you put out my eye."

"But I shouldn't be sorry—I shouldn't be at all sorry," said Baby.

"Well, at any rate, you'd have to spend all your pocket money to buy me new ones in the bazaar," said Mrs. Stevenson, rather feebly.

Baby shook her curly head. "No, I wouldn't," she said.

Mrs. Stevenson unwisely persisted.

"But you'd have to. Wouldn't she, Mrs. Bernard?"

"I'd buy you ones that wouldn't open and shut, then," said Baby vindictively.

"Then I should have you put in prison, and what would you do then?"

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"I'd ask God to kill you," said Baby instantly.

"There's no finding Baby without an answer," said Fluffy, interfering hastily. "Babs, you're talking too much. Run and get Clementina Jane to show Mrs. Bernard."

"Fluffy, you *know* I can't—you *know* she's only gotted her drawers and a shimmy on," said Baby reproachfully.

"Won't you come and have some tea?" said Fluffy hastily; "the only thing is for us to go, as my effort to get rid of Baby has only covered us with confusion. She has an unpleasant habit of stiffening herself out and roaring when she is annoyed, too, and I acknowledge to you I stand in some awe of her."

Neither Mrs. Stevenson nor Mrs. Bernard made any attempt to repulse his civility. After all, it was not their business to punish him for his possible sins, and he looked very young and pleasant; and if they stayed with Baby, she might stiffen herself and roar.

Besides, it was only a rumor, and perhaps it made Fluffy the more interesting.

As for him, he talked and laughed in vain, and for the first time in his life could not get rid of the weight on his mind. He could not forget that Sir John was leaving for Bombay next day.

❧      ❧      ❧      ❧      ❧

"At last he builded a perfect faith,  
Fenced round about with 'The Lord thus saith';  
To himself he fitted the doorway's size,  
Meted the light to the need of his eyes,  
And knew, by a sure and certain sign,  
That the work of his fingers was divine."

—LOWELL.

❧      ❧      ❧      ❧      ❧

## CHAPTER VIII

"I SHOTTED six Afridis with mine little gun,  
and two tigers and the khitmaghar," said  
Baby triumphantly.

"Did you?" said Frank absently.

"Mine gun is all covered with blood," said Baby  
with satisfaction; "are you sick, Fluffy?"

"Don't worry, Babs; there's a good fellow," said  
Frank. "There's a large lion in the veranda you  
might go and kill."

"No, I'll sit and think," said Baby.

Truth to tell, she thought the study the safest  
refuge just at present. She had been spending a  
delicious hour in her bath-room, enjoying a strictly  
forbidden play of pouring all the water she could  
find into the bath, and sailing all sorts of things to  
England, and she had made the front of her frock  
wet, and judged it prudent to stay quiet till it dried.



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So, as Frank, for the first time in her knowledge, did not seem to desire her society, she turned a chair upside down, settled herself between the legs, and talked to herself quietly.

The lamp had not been brought in yet, and the fire was the only light in the darkening room. Fluffy sat over it, his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. It was the beginning of March and there was really no need for a fire, but it was a dull day and the dufta was always a cold room. The wood in the big Indian hearth flamed and crackled, and once or twice threw out sparks, which burnt themselves away unheeded by Fluffy.

He was very anxious, and anxiety was so new to him. Ever since the morning he had been waiting for a telegram from Bombay to say how Violet was and what Sir John had decided to do, he had not been able to forget even when he was with Barbara, and now that he was alone it was growing harder to bear every minute.

At any time discovery might come. Only Fluffy's bearer knew how often his room was empty at night, but chance might give the knowledge to some one else any day. Any day, too, gossip might awake to his frequent visits to the hotel. Frank did not feel as if he much cared; it would settle things, whether for better or worse.

But what would everybody think about him and about Barbara when they knew? Fluffy, who liked to stand well with his world, felt it was hard that for

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Barbara's sake the full truth could never be known to justify him.

And Barbara? At least, he told himself, it was better for her than if he had stood aside and let her pass on her way.

It was worse to think of Violet. Optimistic as he was, he could not persuade himself that things would turn out for the best for Violet.

But at least when the telegram came he would know, and anything was better than this uncertainty.

He had forgotten all about Baby, and it took him two or three minutes to realize Russell's presence in the room and insistent call upon his attention.

"Mamma has sent me," Russell announced, "to say that there is a meeting upstairs, and will you please come."

"Oh, goodness!" said Fluffy, "I forgot. I promised your mother to help. But I suppose Peter did; it's his show. How stupid of me!"

He got up, not altogether reluctantly. He had promised Lady Cooke to help at this meeting and to attend it, simply from his innate inclination to be obliging; but now he felt even a Christian Science meeting would be better than sitting over the fire, thinking of Violet.

"Baby had better go to nurse," said Russell loftily; "silly little girl; I wonder why she always likes to sit in a chair turned upside down. But then, she is such a Baby."

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"I am a C.S.I.," Baby began softly, "Russell is *not*——"

"Pooh!" said Russell, "I *know* she's a C.S.I., but she shouldn't let it make her proud. If *I* was a C.S.I. I shouldn't be proud; but I am an admitted member, which is much better."

"It isn't," said Baby.

"Of course it is," said Russell.

Whereupon Baby laid herself stiffly out on the floor and screamed tearlessly.

This was what generally happened when Russell and she were left to themselves, and had Frank been less self-engrossed he would have interfered before it was too late.

As it was, he had to carry Baby to the nursery, an absolutely stiff and solid weight, screaming at the top of her voice all the way, while Russell followed with his most superior air.

"What a naughty little girl she is," he said, as they went to the drawing-room, having left Baby prone upon the nursery floor and still screaming.

Fluffy made his apologies to the assembled meeting to the accompaniment of distant shrieks.

There were about twenty people present, all ladies, with the exception of Major Peterson and a couple of other men, and certainly not half the number were Christian Scientists. The rest had come for curiosity, or because Lady Cooke had asked them, or perhaps because they liked going to Government House.

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The drawing-room was arranged with rows of chairs, and two small tables by the balcony doors did duty for the readers' desks. Lady Cooke had already taken her place at one, and Major Peterson at the other; and Fluffy, being late, slid hastily into a seat, finding himself next the prettiest girl in the room, by instinct.

The service opened with a hymn, which was "Jesus Shall Reign," considerably altered, and some confusion was created by an inclination on the part of the congregation to lapse into the more familiar version. Then came readings from the Old and New Testament, with explanatory comments from "Health and Science," followed by an interval for silent prayer, which Fluffy shamelessly employed in looking round him. He considered this time a fair test of the sincerity of the gathering. Lady Cooke and Major Peterson were obviously in earnest, and so were a good many others; but some were posing, like Russell, and intensely self-conscious, and others, like the pretty girl beside Fluffy, cast many glances through the hands that covered their faces.

The pause was not very long; indeed, the whole service was short, and Frank, with his mind on telegrams, was thankful for it.

The only spoken prayer was the Lord's Prayer, with comments on each petition, and a sermon was read, the one appointed for all Christian Science services for that day.

Fluffy had to go round with a lacquer tray for the

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collection, before the closing hymn, and, full of this unusual impatience of his, found everybody irritatingly slow, and wished that the Indian habit of writing chits when money was not at hand had never been invented.

When the hymn was over and Lady Cooke rose, with the evident intention of speech, he wished sincerely that he had not come.

"I only want to add a few words," she said, "and this because I know so few of those present are with us, heart and soul, as yet. Our religion, founded by our beloved leader, Mrs. Eddy, in 1866, has as yet made small progress in India. Here it numbers units where in England it counts hundreds, and in America thousands, but it gains ground daily. It is my great pride that I may even now rejoice in the belief that I have helped to form a small nucleus which will and must spread its influence, and help to destroy the beliefs in sin and sickness, which make life a misery to so many.

"Remember that with Christian Science all things are possible. Sin, sickness, disease, are but false beliefs of mortal mind, and through understanding of Good they are destroyed.

"Sin is obsolete—dust returning to dust, nothingness to nothingness. Sin is not mind; it is just the supposition that there is more than one mind. It issues a false claim, and the claim, being worthless, is in reality no claim whatever. God pities our woes with the love of a human father for his child, not

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by becoming human and knowing sin or naught, but by removing our knowledge of what is not. He could not destroy our woes totally, if he possessed any knowledge of them.' ”

Lady Cooke paused; Frank heaved an audible sigh of impatience, and his raised eyebrows asked the pretty girl next him if *she* understood what it was all about.

Lady Cooke changed her position, and went on.

“From sickness and disease we are exempt,” she said; “it is by mentally impressing this upon the patient, in the eloquent silence and love of Christian Science, that our cures are effected. Life in this nineteenth century has become so unwholesome that everybody is in need of healing, and why should we trust to doctors and medicine when Christ and the apostles wrought their cures without them? But even the Scriptures gave no direct interpretation of the Scientific basis for demonstrating the spiritual principle of healing, until our Heavenly Father saw fit, through the key to the Scriptures in ‘Science and Health,’ to unlock the mystery of Godliness. We do not undertake our cures for nothing, and of this fact our enemies have taken much advantage. But why should we? Is not the laborer worthy of his hire? Did not Judas carry the bag? If there are any present whose minds are opening to the truth, and who have questions they wish to ask, I beg they will remain behind, and I will do my best to help them. And I have here some copies of ‘Science and Health,’ with

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key to the Scriptures, at 16 rupees, which will do more than I can.' It would help me much, if any of those who have been cured by Christian Science would step forward and give their testimony."

Lady Cooke sat down, and there was a long pause.

Fluffy hoped no one would break it, and that all was over, but he was mistaken.

A gaunt lady, with prominent brown teeth and a face that told of hot weathers, rose in her seat, and there was a movement of interest.

She was very nervous and spoke hurriedly, twisting her gloves into a ball in ceaselessly working hands.

"I—I do not like coming forward, but I feel it is my duty," she said painfully, so painfully that Frank felt nervous sympathetically. "I—I have been a sufferer from—from—from indigestion," she said, bringing it out with a rush, "and I was persuaded to go for help to Christian Science. My faith at first was very slight—too slight. I was easily discouraged; I gave it up and took—a—a—pill."

There was a murmur of horror, and Fluffy for an instant wondered if the gaunt lady was playing a practical joke.

"I got worse," she said—and there was an impressive silence—"and, thank God, in my pain I again turned to Christian Science, this time with fuller faith. I was cured in three weeks and I have never suffered since."

She sat down, worn out with the effort she had

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made, and Frank resisted an inclination to ask how long it was since her cure.

Encouraged by her example, another lady rose, this time a smartly dressed, brisk little officer's wife, full of self-confidence.

"It is only a small thing, but the other day I suffered from severe toothache, and I completely cured it by a smart application of Christian Science," she said.

As she sat down, the purdah over the door was drawn aside and the bearer stood, with a telegram on a tray.

Frank sprang to his feet, but Lady Cooke caught sight of the man at the same moment and waved him back.

It is true a quick flush rose to her cheeks, and her eyes followed him longingly; she was not sufficiently disengaged from the world to be indifferent to what the telegram might tell her, but she would not yield to her feelings. She was to be pitied, but Fluffy did not pity her.

He sat down suddenly, realizing that every face was turned toward him in surprised expectation of a testimony, but he was more angry with Lady Cooke than he had ever been with anybody in his life. When Russell rose in his seat, the only child present, and began to speak with excitement, Frank quietly left his place and walked to the door.

"I used often to have headaches," Russell began, but Frank had dropped the purdah behind him, and



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given a hasty recall to the bearer, who was halfway downstairs.

The telegram was directed to Lady Cooke, but that scarcely made him hesitate.

He tore it hastily open.

"Hope arrive with Violet Tuesday. No worse."

Fluffy did not even make an exclamation. He signed the receipt, folded up the telegram very carefully and put it back in its envelope.

Whether he had been standing on the stairway a long or a short time when the out-flux of ladies began, he never knew.

But he was quite awake to his duties then, and escorted the departing guests downstairs, and answered composedly, when some one asked for his fiancée, that he had just heard they were to expect Sir John and his daughter on Tuesday.

When he went back to the drawing-room Russell was talking excitedly to Major Peterson, and there were still two ladies left with Lady Cooke.

She gave Frank an anxious look as he came into the room, but he felt pitiless and carefully kept his face devoid of all expression.

He sauntered across the room, and in spite of herself, Lady Cooke's attention followed him. This was unfortunate, for her whole mind was required to avoid confusion in her answers, as it was a little difficult to devote herself to one lady, who was pursuing inquiries as to the cause of mortal error, and at the same time not neglect the other, who wanted to

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know if Christian Science could help her to cure an ingrowing nail on her big toe.

"Fluffy," said Russell importantly, "you know *I* spoke. Did you hear me? I stood up and told them all how I was cured, didn't I, Major Peterson?"

"I dare say you did," said Frank; "but, Major, I want to hear about something more substantial than indigestion or toothache being cured."

Major Peterson was a rotund little man, with a few long hairs brushed across a shiny bald head.

He turned to Fluffy with disapprobation.

"A friend of mine has a cousin in America," he said in his slow drawl, "who was almost blind. She became a believer, and then she said to herself: 'Am I leaving all to God while I trust to two pieces of glass for sight?' She threw away her spectacles and found she could see perfectly. Read any of our papers and you will find hundreds of cases——"

"But they are all in America," said Frank; "I want to see a broken leg or a broken neck mended at hand. Now, Major, honestly, if you were smashed up in the polo field, would you call in a doctor or a Christian Scientist?"

"My dear Scott, what is the use of doctors? God is infinite and a good surgeon."

"But now, Major, if you were to break your leg?" Fluffy urged.

"I live in the present," said Major Peterson, after a momentary pause; "but undoubtedly medicines are useless——"

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"But what would you do?" said Frank obstinately.

"I cannot say," said Major Peterson. He was a very honest man.

"I wouldn't have a doctor," said Russell; "I would believe and believe, and that would make anything right. It was only through believing that miracles were done, and there could be miracles now, mamma says, if people would believe. I should love to see a miracle!"

"And so should I," said Fluffy recklessly; "good heavens! a miracle is exactly what I want now. Don't look so astonished, Russell; I'm only thinking that the miracle of the fishes would be highly convenient for the dinner party to-night, for the Karachi fish has arrived uneatable. Mrs. Morris, are you going? Let me have the pleasure of escorting you downstairs. Yes, Lady Cooke, it's a telegram from Sir John, and I took the liberty of opening it, as I was so anxious about Violet."

And if there was a faint emphasis on the "I," poor Lady Cooke did not notice it.



What recke I now of comely dame?  
What care I now for fair pucelle?  
Unscorched I meet their glance of flame,  
Unmovede I mark their bosoms swel.

—CHAUCER.



## CHAPTER

### IX

“WELL?” said Barbara.

“Well,” said Frank, “it’s over—I’ve seen her—and I feel a beast.”

“But have you told her?”

Barbara had stood a little aloof from her husband, holding herself away from his caressing arms, but she could not resist him long.

When he said: “Darling, *you* are not going to be unkind to me?” she yielded and kissed him passionately.

“There was no question of telling her anything,” he said; “you don’t know, and I didn’t realize, how ill she is. She looks like death, poor little thing, and she had to be half lifted into the carriage, and fainted as we were helping her out.”

Frank was distressed and shaken; he had no experience of illness, and Violet’s utter weakness had come as a shock to him.

“I had no idea anybody could look so ill,” he

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said; "her face was all eyes, and her hands—you could see through them, Barbara!"

He was silent, remembering it was the looseness of the ring he had given her that had first turned his attention to Violet's hands. And how her poor little white face had lighted up when she saw him at the station!

He sat down with his head on his hands and gave a very heavy sigh.

"It was dreadful to see her," he said, and Barbara found herself struggling with a sort of satisfaction. Violet could not be feared as a rival; she could not be pretty now, and men did not like unhealthy women.

She wanted to overwhelm Frank with questions, but restrained herself, feeling her way carefully.

"Were you alone with her?" she said.

"I went to the station," said Frank, "and Lady Cooke and the nurse and I came back with her; but I sat on the box so as to leave her plenty of room. Then she fainted, as I told you, and they put her to bed, and I came straight to you. But I am to see her this evening if she is well enough."

"Poor Frank!" said Barbara tenderly, "it's very hard for you, my poor boy."

"What *am* I to do, Barbara?" he said.

She knelt down beside him, and drew his hands down from his face, caressing them between hers and looking at him with loving, anxious eyes, till he began to forget everything else.

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"Darling," she said, "you *must* break with her."

"You mean I must go and tell her I can't marry her?" said Frank dejectedly.

"Perhaps you might tell her the whole truth," said Barbara; "you see, Frank, every day you put it off has made it worse. We *can't* go on like this—it's unbearable."

"But you don't understand," said Frank impatiently; "it is not that I don't think of you, darling, but the position is so impossible."

It was the first time he had ever spoken to her impatiently, and he was conscious of it himself at once, and took her into his arms and was very tender and loving, but very unhappy; and Frank was not used to unhappiness and did not bear it well.

It was very hard to leave Barbara and go back to face a meeting with Violet, and he stayed as long as he possibly could; but not even his wife's handsome face could make him forget.

As for her, her disappointed hopes, her intense jealousy, all gave way to her love for him and her desire to comfort him.

But when he was going away she suddenly clung to him, begging him to say that he loved her as much as ever, that he was not sorry for having married her.

"Remember," she said, "I have only got you in the world, and you are going away from me, among your own friends, whom I do not know, to see the girl you did love once."

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Frank was touched to the heart by something forlorn in her voice, and gave her passionate assurance of his love, going away with his head full of her, and wondering how he had ever thought what he once felt for Violet was love.

If only everything could be straightened out, with what happiness he and Barbara could face the world together. If they had any money!

He knew, he had always known, that in a sense it was ruin for him to have married a penniless girl of no position. It had seemed to him, it still seemed to him, that his marriage was worth any sacrifice. But this secrecy, this constant discomfort, the knowledge of Barbara's dubious position, all this grew daily more disagreeable.

Now there was Violet to consider, too. What if all this should *kill* her?—she looked very frail. Could he and Barbara ever be happy then?

And Frank did so want to be happy.

His heart was like lead when he found Lady Cooke in the drawing-room, and was given permission to go and see Violet.

"She is expecting you, but remember she is very weak and tired, and meet her as calmly as you can, Frank—not even too much happiness," she said.

Frank did not look as if he would be likely to offend in this way.

He raised a troubled face, so troubled that even Lady Cooke noticed it, and felt more kindly to him for the pain in it.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

He was capable of deep feeling after all, she thought to herself.

"Dear Frank," she said, "do help me to overcome Sir John's prejudices. It is unbearable to stand aside, when if I might make her cast aside doctors and medicines and trust in God, I could save her for us. Oh, Frank, do help me!"

Her eyes filled with tears, and he felt vaguely sorry for her, but too engrossed in his own troubles to give her full sympathy.

With haste, born of a doubt of his own resolution, he went downstairs to Violet's room.

Frank himself had done more than anybody else toward the arrangement of it. He had overseen the draping of thick, soft curtains over the veranda door, he had taken some of the prettiest rugs and hangings from other rooms to cover the walls and the floor, and make the room look less Indian. He had suggested to Lady Cooke that the fireplace could easily be tiled, and that a dark wood dado would take off from the height of the walls. And he had hurried mistris and dirzis and kept them to their work.

He had felt that he could never do enough for Violet to make up for the great wrong he had done her, and perhaps he had a secret instinct of propitiating fate.

The room looked quite cosy, thanks to his efforts. There was a pink-shaded lamp on the table, beside a huge bowl of the finest roses the garden could sup-



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ply, and a bright wood fire burned in the tiled fireplace.

Violet was lying on a couch, surrounded by pillows, with her small, thin face looking smaller than ever in their midst. As Frank had said, she was all eyes, huge, excited blue eyes, shining out of a face absolutely colorless except for the betraying scarlet spots in her cheeks. No, Violet did not look pretty now; her soft, fair hair was the only thing about her that was pretty still. She was dressed in a full, light-blue tea-gown, which lay in folds about her and looked much too big for her, as it was. She had worn it at the beginning of her illness, and Fluffy had admired her in it, but she had not been wise in persisting in wearing it to meet him again.

It made him realize even more fully the change in her, and brought him a fresh shock.

"Frank!" said Violet, in a voice that was weak indeed, but full of a wonderful, longing tenderness.

And when he came to her, she held up her face confidently, and what could he do but kiss her? He could not be wilfully unkind to any one, much less to this girl he had injured beyond remedy.

He knelt down beside her and kissed her thin hands very pityingly and tenderly.

"My poor little Violet," he said in a shaken voice.

"Do you think I look so ill?" she said. "I shall be better now I have you. I have longed for you so, dear—it is good to have you again."

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Her long, contented sigh brought a flush of shame to Frank's cheeks.

"How thin your fingers are, darling," he said. The words slipped out without his meaning it; it was so natural to use caressing words to Violet, poor little thing.

When he looked at her hand lying in his strong brown one, a sudden rush of intense self-reproach was almost unbearable. It was his fault that everything had got into such a muddle.

If only Violet had not been ill, they would have been married a year ago, and been very happy together, and he would never have met Barbara. But Fluffy was not prepared to admit, even to himself, that he wished he had never met Barbara. He did not wish it.

"Violet," he said, after a moment, speaking with effort, "tell me, are you as fond of me as ever? Have you never seen any one while you were away you liked as well?"

"Frank!"

He did not look at her.

"What a ridiculous question!" she said, with a faint laugh, "as if you didn't know better than that, you foolish, *adorable* boy!"

And then before he could answer she began to cough so persistently that he was frightened, and the nurse, who had been sitting on the veranda, came in and turned him out.

Frank was very unhappy.

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A continual dropping in a very rainy day  
and a contentious woman are alike.—*Proverbs.*  
🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘

## CHAPTER

### X

SIR JOHN had come into his wife's morning-room, which was quite an unusual thing for him to do. He generally spent the morning in the dufta downstairs, with Fluffy and the papers, if there was nothing special to be done, and Lady Cooke, upstairs, carried on her Christian Science correspondence with the help of Major Peterson, who was much more her secretary than her husband's.

On Sir John's entrance she hastily pushed a few magazines and papers into a drawer of her writing-table, and turned to him in some surprise.

His face never had much expression; the only sign of disturbance about him was that he had forgotten to take off the spectacles which he only wore for reading, and which always gave rather an owlish expression to his narrow, pinched face.

He was an awkwardly built man, with sloping shoulders and long arms, that he always found in the way. He had a nervous habit of constantly stroking and pulling at his short gray whiskers while he was cudgelling his brains for a fitting remark. Sir

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John always mentally considered and rejected two or three remarks before he found one he considered worth making, and this habit, though doubtless excellent in theory, was not conducive to easy, general conversation.

Just now he knew very well what he was going to say, but he was very doubtful about how to say it, and looked anxiously once or twice at his wife before he spoke. Constraint, being between them at all, was, as was natural, constraint at its worst.

"Helen," he said, "the child seems a little more herself this morning."

"Her cough was rather troublesome in the beginning of the night, but after twelve she slept fairly well, and is more rested," said Lady Cooke.

"I am very unhappy about her."

Lady Cooke made no answer. She knew what was coming, and firmly knew what she meant to say.

"I want to ask for your promise, Helen," said Sir John slowly, "your promise that you won't talk about Christian Science to Violet, that you will not throw away the last chance of her recovery by exciting her."

"I can't promise," said Lady Cooke. She spoke in a dull, level voice, but her nervous fingers twisted and untwisted themselves round a paper-knife she was holding quite unconsciously.

"But you *must* promise. I feel it my duty to insist on a promise," said Sir John.

"There is no use in making a promise I should

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only break," Lady Cooke said. "John, it's not in reason I could keep it. Can you expect me to stand aside and see my child die, when I know I have the power of saving her?"

"You did not save Bobby," said Sir John, in a low voice.

It was a thing that once said could never be forgotten between them, and he knew it.

A dull, pained, crimson grew gradually into Lady Cooke's cheeks.

"I could have saved him," she said, "if I had had time and freedom and faith from others. I do not feel I have lost him, though he has passed on. I know you blame me——" She paused, drawing her breath sharply. "I can't talk about it," she said.

"You have had your way with Bobby; you are having your way with Russell. I will not let you have your way with Violet," said Sir John hoarsely. "I cannot lose all my children."

"You will lose Violet. Doctors and medicines cannot save her."

"At least she shall have her chance. I know you spoke to her this morning, and I will not have it—I will not. You must promise."

"I will not promise," said Lady Cooke. The ivory paper-knife, twisted unnaturally, broke off short with a sharp sound.

The husband and wife looked at each other, and neither found anything to say.

At last Sir John broke the silence.

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"You will not promise?" he said.

"I *cannot*," said Lady Cooke breathlessly.

"God help us!" said Sir John.

Further discussion was useless, and he did not know what to do.

That morning he had found Violet and her mother together. Violet, whose only chance, the doctors said, was to be kept free from excitement, with flushed face and shining eyes, and Lady Cooke hastily pushing some papers out of sight on his entrance.

It was evidently to be a struggle between father and mother, and a struggle of the most intensely painful nature.

After a short hesitation Sir John went downstairs to his daughter's room.

Frank had been reading to her, and had just gone out, and at a word from Sir John the nurse took her work on to the veranda.

Sir John Cooke was one of those unfortunate people afflicted with the worst and most incurable shyness. He was at his ease with nobody, and certainly not with his daughter, to whom he had seldom spoken a dozen serious words. He was utterly devoted to his children, but he had no power of showing his affection or gaining theirs.

"Father, how good of you to come in again to see me this morning," said Violet, but she was too weak and tired willingly to face the effort of conversation with him.

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Sir John would have gladly had himself cut in pieces for her pleasure, but she did not know it, and only wondered what she could find to talk about that would interest him.

"Violet," he said, "you know the doctors want you to be kept very quiet."

"Yes, I know," said Violet, "and so I am. Fluffy has been reading 'Esmond' to me; he won't even let me talk."

"You like being read to? Shall I go on with the book?"

"Oh, no, father; please don't trouble. Frank will go on with it later."

She was only anxious that her father should not take so much trouble; but Sir John put down the book at once, feeling that she disliked his offer and would not care for his reading.

"But, Violet, my dear," he said, after a moment's silence, "I do want you to promise me this. Don't let your mother talk to you about Christian Science and excite you."

A hot color flamed into Violet's thin cheeks, and he went on hastily:

"Your mother's present ideas are most unfortunate. She wants to persuade you to refuse doctors, and—I know she means it all for the best—but I want you to promise not to let her talk to you."

"Oh, father!" said Violet. She was excited already; her breath came and went sharply, and her hands were trembling.

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"It is all the worst kind of folly," said Sir John; "you are a sensible girl and you know it."

"Yes," said Violet, "I suppose so. But sometimes, when mother talks—it's a sort of chance, father—I can't help listening, somehow," she ended wistfully.

It was just what Sir John had been afraid of. Violet, nervous and unstrung, had a sick person's inclination to listen to any suggestion, to welcome any idea.

"Father," she said, "it makes mother so happy, and she is so sure, and how can I not listen? And if there *should* be a chance in it!" Her blue eyes were shining strangely.

"I do want to get well so *dreadfully!*" she said.





L'argent, l'argent, dit-on ; sans lui tout est stérile :  
La vertu sans argent n'est qu'un meuble inutile ;  
L'argent en honnête homme érige un scélérat ;  
L'argent seul au palais peut faire un magistrat.

—BOILEAU.



## CHAPTER

### XI

WHEN Frank afterward looked back on the fortnight following Violet's arrival in Rahore, it always seemed to him like a nightmare.

It was a strange time.

On account of Violet's illness there were no more large entertainments, but he played polo and tennis and racquets, and met people and talked to them, and his life went on outwardly much as usual.

Though the crash might come any day, he must get exercise in the meantime, and, in truth, Frank, usually the idlest person in the world, could not now bear to be idle.

People said they could not have imagined Fluffy had such depths of feeling and would be so overwhelmed by his fiancée's illness, and Sir John and Lady Cooke were touched by the new expression of pain on his boyish face.

He was very good to Violet. He was always

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ready to read to her, it was he who found a shady corner in the garden for her long chair and helped to carry it there; he went for almost daily drives in a fitton-gharry with her—Frank, who loathed driving. And he was an excellent nurse, strong and gentle, and seeming always to know what to do by instinct.

If Violet had been herself she could not have failed to suspect that pity, not love, inspired his devotion, but ill as she was his tenderness satisfied her completely.

But there was an intense strain in the house.

Sir John furtively watched his wife; except when Frank was with Violet, her father was always on the alert. Lady Cooke was never alone with her for long before he made his appearance, and he would sit there, stiff and intensely uncomfortable, snatching at excuses for his presence, and fully conscious of not being wanted. It was acute misery to him, and do what he would there were often times when Lady Cooke took an easy advantage and found pleas to refuse him admittance. Fluffy had once or twice discovered him wandering restlessly about the passages on these occasions.

Barbara was not much less to be pitied. Her life was a very lonely one. She had no tastes and no occupations, and the days seemed endless. Frank's visit was the one bright spot in the day, and when he was away she had no one to speak to.

Her marriage had certainly as yet brought her

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neither honor nor complete happiness, but she regretted nothing. Her great love for Frank was teaching her unselfishness, and it was a love which grew daily. She had nothing and nobody else to think of, and he was always at his very best with her, and Frank's best was charming.

Barbara was never definitely sure when she grew fully to realize the impossibility of reliance on her young husband. The knowledge came, not lessening her love, but changing it, adding something protecting and intensely tender which had not been there before.

In these latter days she thought less of her future as Lady Francis Scott, and more every day of how to make life smooth for her husband. He had married her, and she was intensely grateful in that he had done so, but she began to realize that this marriage might spell ruin for him. Frank's was not a nature to face hardships and fight the world, and she knew it. If he lost all the good things of life in consequence of his marriage with her, was it not possible that some day his love would turn to dislike? Barbara always felt that it was, though she knew that he would have scorned the idea.

She hated asking him for money, and he equally hated being asked, but the hotel bills had to be paid, and those for the purchases she had made on first reaching Rahore—she made no more now.

The bills were not very large, but Frank had no ready money to meet them with, and found himself

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driven to a bunniah, as he had been once or twice before. This complicated matters still further, and Barbara began to wonder where the money for their passages home was to come from. Even if they did not go home, there was the summer to think of, and soon, too, for March was half-way through.

Frank would not listen to her suggestion of remaining in the plains, but nothing had been definitely decided, and though he talked of Murree, it was now so late in the year that there would probably be difficulty in finding anywhere for her to go.

And Murree would mean six months' separation from Frank, who was to go to Simla in the middle of April with the Governor. Barbara longed to go to Simla too, but realized the difficulty and the expense, doubtful where the money to live anywhere was to come from.

She had even once or twice thought vaguely of the possibility of finding some one who wanted dancing lessons, but Frank rejected the idea with vehemence, and she, herself, felt it unfitting for his wife.

He reminded her often that he was sure to sell his ponies well after the Umballa tournament, but as she knew the bunniah had supplied the money to buy them, Barbara could not feel as if this would solve all difficulties.

She understood now that Frank, though he got his coats from Poole and had four polo ponies, had been right when he called himself poor.



With what sharp checks I in myself am shent  
When into Reason's audit I do go.

—SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.



## CHAPTER

### XII

“TO go into a dark room full of lions and tigers and snakes—that’s brave!” said Baby.

“*Indeed* it is,” Frank fervently agreed; “it’s not a thing I should care to do myself, I assure you.”

He was sitting on the floor in the *dufta*, playing with Baby and a large array of tin soldiers, and he was really enjoying himself—it was impossible for Frank to keep at one dead level of unhappiness. He loved playing with Baby, and he was arranging piquets on a newspaper hill on the most scientific principles.

Baby, warlike though she was, had no confidence in the dark, and never went to sleep without a weapon of some kind tucked under her pillow.

The night before, waking during the temporary absence of her nurse, she had rushed into the midst of a small dinner party, clad in pink pyjamas and armed with a large Indian club, and had cast herself, in floods of tears, into Fluffy’s arms.

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Now, in the daylight she was fearless, and could speak of dark rooms with careless courage.

Frank had read to Violet till she had fallen asleep, and till his voice was hoarse; he had given up polo to take her for a drive, and his position, though painful as ever, had lost the acuteness of novelty. He had really forgotten his troubles for the moment, as he marshalled his troops carefully through a dangerous defile between the fender and a footstool, and endeavored to persuade Baby to adhere to the rules of warfare and not go in for indiscriminate slaughter.

"No, Babs," he said gravely, "don't you see the piquets? You couldn't possibly get past."

"But I've shooted all the piquets," Baby objected.

"No, you haven't. You haven't anything like enough cover to get near them. I am afraid we are making rather a mess on the floor, sir," said Frank, looking up at Sir John, who had just come in.

He had never been deceived by Sir John's manner, but then Frank had no awe of anybody; he was not at all abashed at being discovered sitting on the floor playing at tin soldiers by his precise chief.

"Baby has absolutely no regard for life," he said, with a laugh; "she is a most erratic general."

"Frank, I want to speak to you," said Sir John.

Something in his tone made Frank's heart sink suddenly. He knew at once that Sir John was not going to talk of dinner parties or arrangements for Simla.

He got up with a changed face.

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"Baby, run away," said Sir John rather feebly; but Baby was not to be so easily disposed of. Her father had been driven so far as to weakly suggest that he and Frank should betake themselves to the dining-room, when she suddenly and unexpectedly yielded, and they were left alone.

Frank felt acutely uncomfortable. Had a rumor about Barbara reached Sir John? Was that what he was going to talk about?

It was the only thing he could think of, and he prepared himself desperately to meet it with full admission. After all, when it was once over he would not be sorry, whatever followed.

Sir John walked twice across the room, knocked over a dozen tin soldiers, put on and then took off his spectacles, pulled at his whiskers, and evidently found much difficulty in beginning.

At last Fluffy, finding the waiting unbearable, said: "You wanted to speak to me, sir?"

"I do want to speak to you, Frank, but it's not very easy to say what I want. If I was not absolutely driven to it in desperation——" He hesitated, but Fluffy had nothing to say.

"Frank, you see, you realize, how very ill Violet is," he said; "she is in a weak, excitable state, and not fit to judge for herself. She is beginning to be influenced by her mother, and it is *fatal* for her."

Frank drew a long sigh. It was not what he ex-

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pected; it was nothing new that Sir John wanted to speak to him about.

"The child was quivering with excitement last night, and this morning the doctor told me that unless this is put a stop to he will not answer for her life for many weeks."

Sir John paused, and looked at Frank, hesitating again.

"I—I do feel it, sir," said Frank, in a low voice.

"I know you do, my dear boy. I am very much touched by your devotion to Violet, and it is that which enables me to say what I am going to say. Frank—Frank—they all say that there is no hope; that I am learning to bear. But I *cannot* bear that the child's last days with us should be full of worry and excitement—that she should turn from us all as she will—as her mother has done. And yet I cannot forbid her mother to see her."

He stopped again, but Frank gave him no help.

"We go to Simla in the middle of next month, as you know, and Simla is not the place for Violet in her present state of health. The doctors advise Kashmir; but I can't go there, and if I send her alone with her mother——"

Sir John cleared his throat, and quite unconsciously began to arrange some tin soldiers on the table in squares and circles.

"But what can I do?" said Frank hoarsely.

"Frank——" said Sir John, and stopped.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Frank," he said again, "I am going to ask a great deal from you—I feel as if I was forcing my daughter on you—— But you asked her to marry you—she is your chosen wife——"

"But Violet can't marry!"

"There is her money—you will be most welcome to that—no, I do not wrong you, my boy, but on my side this gives me comfort. I want you to sacrifice this summer of your life, I want you to marry Violet nominally, and to take her to Kashmir, and to make the last months of her life happy as it is in your power to do. I have observed you together, and I know how happy she always is with you, and how tender you are to her."

Sir John paused. It was not easy for him to offer his daughter, even to Fluffy, and he was giving her up. When he parted with her it would be forever, and he felt it keenly.

"But you are more to her than any of us, Frank," he said; "she is happy if you are in the room and restless when you are away. You are more to her than any of us."

Frank felt he ought to speak, but words fit to be spoken would not come. He stood, staring at Sir John in dumb consternation.

"I feel I can trust her to you, Frank," Sir John said; "if I seem to thrust my daughter on you, it is because I know you can be such a little time together. It is only the shadow of a wife I offer you, my poor boy."

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It was difficult to find the right words. Sir John's pride and reserve fought against this thing his love for his daughter was making him do, and it was harder than he had thought, for Frank's silence was half-betraying.

"Your marriage would take place absolutely quietly——" he began again.

"My—marriage!"

"You ought to start by the first week in April at latest, to avoid any heat. And, of course, the journey to Kashmir would have to be taken in easy stages."

"The journey to Kashmir!" Frank repeated stupidly.

"I should write at once, or wire, to secure you a house in Srinagar—in fact, unless I can get one, you can't go, for Violet is not fit for house-boat or tent life. You will, of course, take the nurse, and I should like you to have the victoria, and drive in, in easy stages."

Frank ought to have interrupted long ago, and he knew it. But the thing had come upon him as such a shock and had found him unprepared. He stood before the fireplace with bent head and averted face and desperate shame at his heart.

Sir John could not but realize that he had not welcomed the proposal with the gladness of an ardent lover, but then there was much allowance to be made. He was not proposing to Frank to be in any sense the real husband of his daughter, and he had

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

told him that she was dying. Frank might love Violet, even though his love was not strong enough willingly to sacrifice himself as her father would have done.

"You could take up your ponies, and you'll get very good polo in Srinagar," said Sir John, and felt ashamed of his bribe.

"Sir," said Frank, breaking a pause, "I—I can't answer you just now. I feel myself very much to blame. Will you allow me to leave things as they are till to-morrow? I will answer you fully if you will excuse me for this evening—for now I *cannot!*"

Frank's voice was full of an exceeding bitterness.

To-day he could not speak; he must talk over the future with Barbara, and to-morrow she should help him to write a letter telling a bad thing in the best way possible, and he would avoid seeing Sir John's face when he knew Frank was a coward and a liar.



Orléans, Beaugency!  
Notre Dame de Cléry  
Vendôme! Vendôme!  
Quel chagrin, quel ennui!  
De compter toute la nuit  
Les heures—les heures!



## CHAPTER

### XIII

“I WISH to God I had some money!” said Frank miserably. “I don’t know what we are to do, sweetheart; forgive me for marrying you. I can sell the ponies at once, of course, though it’s rather rough luck on the other chaps; but there are so many people to satisfy.”

He had flung himself dejectedly into a chair, and Barbara was sitting on the arm, her hand in his.

“And even if we were the only people to suffer!” he said. “It will kill Violet when she hears. It seems almost a pity, sweet, that we were married so soon.”

“Frank!” said Barbara, growing very white.

“My darling—my darling—you don’t understand me. What I meant was that, as poor Violet has only a few months of life before her, it seems a pity that I can’t make them happy for her, and then—*afterward*—we could have been happy. No, it sounds brutal to speak of it like that.”

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Barbara got up without answering, and walked slowly across to the window, standing looking out without seeing anything for a minute or two. Then she turned to him again with a strange, set look in her face.

"You feel the want of money very much, darling?" she said.

"Of course I do—for your sake more than my own. I don't know what we are to do," said Frank.

"And Miss Cooke has money—if you had married her first, you would have had plenty of money?"

"Her uncle left her two thousand a year. But after all, having to act like a brute to her is the worst of it—*much*. Come over to me, dearest."

But Barbara did not move.

"Tell me," she said in an odd voice, "is there absolutely no hope of her recovery?"

"Sir John says none. And *now*—Barbara, come and help me to write that letter."

"I'll help you in the morning," said Barbara. Then she went to him, kneeling beside him, and looking into his eyes, with her arms round his neck.

"Frank, my darling," she said, "tell me one thing. Tell me Violet is nothing to you—that you love me only—that you are not tired of me."

"I love you, and you only, my love!" said Frank, catching fire from the suppressed passion in her voice.

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"And she is nothing to you?"

"She is nothing, and you are everything."

"And you will never change—you will love me always?"

"I will love you always," Frank promised, a promise absurd on the face of it, which has been and will be made by thousands of men every day to thousands of women.

"Stay with me to-night," said Barbara softly, "and in the morning I will help you."

That afternoon Frank took Violet for her drive as usual. Neither of them saw Barbara, who had stationed herself in the shelter of a tree near the gate of Government House, and with jealous eyes studied every line of Violet's drawn face and weak little figure as the carriage drove slowly past.

She did not tell Frank she had seen them when he came back in the evening, but she exerted herself to the utmost to make him happy, and was passionately loving. She tried always to make herself a very slave to him; she was always on the lookout to fetch him matches or cigarettes, or wheel his chair into a comfortable position before he could do it himself. In return she expected a constant love-making on Frank's part, which sometimes became ever so little wearisome to him. Once or twice he had been dimly conscious that unless he was making love to her, they found little to say to each other. It was natural enough; their lives had run on com-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

pletely different lines, and they had no tastes in common, and none of the mutual interests an openly declared marriage would have necessitated.

But this evening Barbara was at her best, and once or twice almost succeeded in persuading him to forget everybody else in the world.

It was she who lay awake that night, long after Frank, in spite of all his troubles, had fallen asleep; it was she who saw the morning light glimmer in through the chinks of the upper window.

Frank looked very boyish when he was asleep; he had forgotten the confusion he had brought into his life, and the unusual lines had relaxed out of his forehead. Barbara watched him, her eyes full of that new, protecting tenderness she was learning, and once or twice touched his cheek softly with her lips so as not to wake him.

Her darling Frank! He looked as happy and careless now as he had done when she first met him on board ship.

When he did awake at last, it was pain to her to see the sleepy joy in his eyes at the sight of her face fade as he remembered what was before him that day.

But till breakfast was over they avoided, by one accord, all mention of the future.

It was the first time he had breakfasted with her in Rahore; what did it matter now, he thought, if his absence was noticed at Government House? In a few hours they must know everything.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

When breakfast was over (and it was Barbara, not Frank, whose appetite was gone), she tried to coax him to be comfortable, and let her fill his pipe for him; but he could not settle down, could not even smoke with that letter hanging over him, and she saw it. He was restless and let his pipe go out twice, and answered her quite shortly.

She herself was very white and silent.

"Frank," she said suddenly, "I want you to believe that whatever I say to you this morning, I love you and shall always love you."

"I know that, darling," said Frank, a little absently. There were so many things to think about, and he had no doubt of his wife's love.

"Frank, I know how badly you are worried about money. Tell me, do you see any chance, any prospect before us of getting clear of debt and being able to live, no matter *how* poorly?"

There was a short pause, and Barbara's anxious eyes searched his face; more depended on his answer than he knew.

"To tell the truth, darling," he said dejectedly, "I don't know where to turn. I feel desperate when I think what I have brought you to. I can't see any way out."

Barbara sighed. But it was only the faintest of hopes that his words had destroyed.

She hesitated for a moment.

"And there is absolutely no chance for Miss Cooke?" she said. "You are *sure*, Frank, *sure*?"



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When he had answered her, she came close to him, and took his hand between hers, looking straight into his eyes.

"Frank," she said, "Frank—why should she hear? Why should you not marry her?"

Frank snatched his hand from Barbara's with an instinctive movement of recoil. He stood facing her with a white face, and the following dead silence seemed endless.

She found herself counting the ticks of the little travelling clock he had given her, till they became maddeningly irritating. The sudden noise of water, as the bheestie filled up the jug and ghurrah in the bath-room, made them both start.

Barbara, without looking at Frank, made a step toward him, and tried to put her arms round his neck, but the movement seemed to end his stupefaction, and he put her away from him decidedly.

"What did you say? I can't have understood," he said slowly.

"Don't look at me—don't speak to me like that!" said Barbara passionately. "It's for your own sake, darling—do you think, for myself, I should mind if we were *beggars*, so long as I had you? Do you think, for myself, I would give you up for an hour to another woman—even a dying woman? Oh, Frank, don't look at me like that—I can't bear it—I *can't* bear it!"

Her words came as an exceeding bitter cry, and

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she covered her face with her hands, but Frank made no movement toward her.

"You are mad!" he said hoarsely. "I am married to *you*. How can I marry Violet?"

"No one should ever know we had been married," said Barbara breathlessly, "and—afterward—we might some day be married again, and no one should know. Frank, it's for your own sake——"

She laid her hand timidly on his arm, but he shook it off roughly.

"Don't touch me!" he said. "Barbara, how dare you suggest such a thing—such a devilish thing? My God, I shall say something we shall both be sorry for if I stay. You—you stand there and ask me to be a blackguard!"

He stopped, staring stupidly at her for a moment, and then he turned, walking blindly out of the room into the sunshine.

Barbara brought a touch of bathos by sending the bearer after him with his helmet; then she threw herself into a chair and burst into wild tears—were they of sorrow or relief?



Oh, 'tis most vile  
To fight upon the one side,  
While one's heart  
Throbs ever responsive to the thought of them  
That lead the other battle.

—*The Devil's Comedy.*



## CHAPTER

### XIV

FRANK left the hotel with only one clear idea in his head. He would go to Sir John Cooke at once, that instant, and tell him the truth; there should be no more hesitation, no more uncertainty.

He could scarcely bear the delay of the hot, white road which lay between him and Government House, and it was all he could do to restrain himself from breaking into a run.

As a matter of fact he arrived damp and scarlet, and the chuprassies at the door stared at him in amazement.

And Sir John and Lady Cooke were both out, having gone to a flower show and on to open a bazaar; Fluffy had forgotten all about these functions, though it was his duty to have accompanied them there.

Now, the check and disappointment seemed more than he could bear. He cursed himself for a fool, and the chuprassi, rather unreasonably, for another,

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

and pulled out his watch restlessly to see how long he had to wait.

It was not yet twelve o'clock, and the bazaar was not to open till twelve.

He hesitated, rejecting the cruelty of a half-formed idea of going to Violet himself.

But he could not wait; every instant of delay increased his burning impatience; he felt he could almost have rushed to the bazaar and declared the truth in the face of all Rahore.

It was polo day, and his head syce was waiting by the veranda to know what the sahib's hookums might be. He stared in amazement when Frank ordered him to saddle Saladin at once, and begged for a repetition of the order.

"Fluffy said: "Saddle Saladin and be damned to you!" and the syce fled in consternation.

Anything was better than sitting there doing nothing. He hardly realized that it was the middle of a hot March day, and galloped the astonished Saladin once round the race-course before he woke to what he was doing. Then he pulled up, in such shade as the Grand Stand afforded, and the pony began to hope he had not an absolute lunatic on his back.

But during that gallop his keen anger against Barbara had begun to melt away. After all, her one thought had been for him; it had blinded her, and had prevented her from seeing the dishonor of the thing she proposed.

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He turned his pony toward the highroad and went slowly along it, thinking hard.

Poor Barbara, he had been unkind to her in the shock of it all. It had been all because of her love for him, and Frank, realizing that it amounted to adoration, could understand what it had cost her to speak as she had spoken.

But how could she for an instant imagine that any honest man could consent to such a thing?

Poor Barbara!

Fluffy took out his tobacco-pouch and began to roll and light a cigarette, letting Saladin's reins lie loose on his neck.

He had the road to himself; even the constant bullock carts had chosen the heat of the day for a rest. The dust lay thick along each side of the cart-track, and powdered Saladin's brown legs and Frank's breeches, and flies buzzed about the pony's eyes, making him whisk his head impatiently and break now and then into a jogging trot.

Frank found himself seeing excuses more easily for Barbara, and felt his anger melting away with relief; it was not pleasant to be angry with her.

She did not realize; she did not understand. He could see her point of view fully now, and made up his mind to be very tender and loving in explaining to her the utter impossibility of the thing she had proposed. But from her point of view—she was offering to give him up for months, to set him free to make the end of a dying girl's life happy, and he

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knew that this could have been no easy thing to Barbara, who grudged every look of his that was not for her. And of course she had known that the marriage would have been merely a ceremony, to enable him to take care of Violet before the eyes of the world.

Yes, he could understand her now.

Frank threw away the end of his cigarette and lighted another, and killed two flies on Saladin's neck.

For a moment he let himself imagine how it would have been with them all had it been possible for an honorable man to do as she had proposed.

He could have taken Violet to Kashmir, and made her happy; he would have devoted himself to her, and she would never have known. Then—*afterward*, as he euphemistically put it to himself—he could have married Barbara openly, and paid off his debts and been free to go back to his regiment and make his wife comfortable. How happy they could have been, and how his beautiful Barbara would have enjoyed her life. And all without injuring anybody—on the contrary—Violet would be saved a slight and a heart-break, and Sir John would be at ease about her.

It would have been the best thing for everybody—if it had only been possible, which, of course, it was not.

It was not as if his marriage with Violet would have been in any sense a real marriage—it would be

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only a ceremony. Yes, he could see Barbara's side of the question more fully every moment. His thoughts floated away in a daydream that was all pleasantness.

He was trying to decide if he should leave the army, and in that case where he and Barbara would prefer to live, when Saladin, being busy with dreams of his own, carelessly stumbled over a loose stone and very nearly deposited himself and his rider in the dust.

This recalled Frank to the present with displeasing abruptness, and he suddenly realized that he was very hot, and turned the pony's nose homeward.

The other side of the question sprang to his mind—the real side. A nine days' wonder in Rahore, ruin for himself and Barbara, and a heart-break for poor little Violet. The pity of it that nothing else was possible!

Suppose he had done as many men would have done—taken the goods the gods gave him and not married Barbara? But he could not have done it. He thanked God there was no woman in the world who need hang her head in shame because of him.

He had meant to be true to Violet; he had tried his hardest to be true to her, and if Barbara had been going to a different fate he could have stood aside.

What a pity—what a pity that it was not possible to do as she suggested! It was he and she alone on

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

whom the sacrifice would fall, for Violet should never know.

After all—would it have been so very shameful? What was it beyond upsetting a few conventional ideas?

It was necessary that the marriage ceremony should take place between him and Violet, to avoid misconstruction from people who did not know the facts of the case. There was no moral law involved, and no injury contemplated to any one.

If the ceremony took place, misconstruction *would* be avoided—among people who did not know the facts of the case.

Plenty of men were unfaithful to their wives for their own selfish gratification, and still considered themselves honorable men; and he would only be nominally unfaithful, for Barbara's own sake, and with her consent, and to do good to everybody.

If he agreed—suddenly, with a whitening face, Frank awoke to the point his thoughts had reached.





It is a great art to make up the mind wisely and well. It is even something, at a pinch, to make it up unwisely and ill. At least the mind is made up. Some people never make up their minds at all, all through life, but seem to pause, perpetually irresolute, on the brink of possibility.

—LETTERS OF PERTINAX.



## CHAPTER

### XV

BARBARA stood for a long time where Frank had left her.

He had rejected her suggestion with horror, but she knew her chief and strongest feeling was relief.

She would have found the thing she had proposed very hard to bear.

It had gradually formed in her mind as Frank talked to her the day before, and been confirmed in the long watches of the night while she lay awake by his side, and realized how unbearable poverty would be to him. If some vague hopes and ambitions of her own mingled, she was honestly unconscious of it. But she was glad he had not listened to her—glad, let what will come, that he was still all her own, that no other woman would ever believe herself to have the right to call him husband.

He had been angry with her, but he would forgive

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her; he *must* forgive her when the first sharp surprise was over and he remembered it was for love of him she had spoken. She felt sure that he would soon come back to her, and she spent the morning in restless expectation of him.

Just after she had sent away a scarcely tasted tiffin he came.

He was hot and dejected; he did not repulse her, but drew her toward him and kissed her passionately.

"Dear, you are dreadfully hot," said Barbara deprecatingly; "you are sure you haven't got fever?"

"No; it's only because I have been riding in the sun."

"Have you had any tiffin? Shall I send for some?"

"I couldn't eat anything. Barbara——"

He drew her to a chair, kneeling beside her, with a miserable face.

"Barbara—did you mean what you said in the morning?"

She stooped and kissed him.

"You have forgiven me, haven't you, darling?" she said.

"But did you mean it?" said Frank.

"I meant it," said Barbara humbly, "but you know what is right."

"Wouldn't you have despised me if I had agreed to it?"

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"Despised you!" said Barbara, and the love in her voice was an answer. "What I thought was that it would bring happiness to so many people and hurt nobody. Forgive me, dear."

"And—you would think no worse of me?"

She only shook her head. A sudden catch in her breath choked her speech.

Frank laid his head on her shoulder, hiding his face.

"Then—I will do it," he said hoarsely, and there was a long silence.

They clung together, and he could feel her heart beating in quick, panting throbs. At that moment she would have given much that her suggestion had never been made.

"But—can you bear it?" she said.

"I shall have to bear it."

"You must see the doctors first; we must be sure—quite sure," she said, and both caught eagerly at the postponement of decision.

"I will go now, at once," he said; "Sir John may have exaggerated."

"And come back to me afterward. I must see you once more while you are all my own," said Barbara passionately.

Frank raised his head and looked at her.

"You are sure you want to go on?" he said.

"Yes, yes, I am sure," said Barbara breathlessly.

It was he that wavered when he came back after seeing the doctors, and it needed many words from

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her, spoken out of the ache in her heart, to steady him for what he had to do.

But he felt himself committed already; his conduct since his marriage, and above all since Violet's arrival in Rahore, had committed him.

And both doctors had told him the same thing; the rest of Violet's life was a matter of months.



Ah! demain, c'est la grande chose!  
De quoi demain sera-t-il fait?  
L'homme aujourd'hui sème la cause,  
Demain Dieu fait mûrir l'effet.



## CHAPTER

### XVI

“**T**HEN all that remains is to settle the day,”  
said Sir John.

Frank's decision had come to him in some sort as a surprise, and as a great relief. The way in which his proposal had been received, the day's hesitation, Frank's unaccounted-for absence—all had made him fear a different reply.

That everything was not as he would have wished, even now, he could not help seeing. No one had ventured to give him a hint of the rumors that were floating about Rahore, but he could not be blind to Frank's unusual behavior, or his miserable face and the utter absence of eagerness in his manner—he who had always been so eager about everything.

In after days Sir John blamed himself much and bitterly that for Violet's sake he had shut his eyes and asked no questions. It was not without a struggle in his own mind against his sense of right that he did so; it would have been at all times

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intensely repugnant to him to question Frank on anything he wished to keep concealed, and he crushed down the suspicions which would arise in his mind and told himself that he *knew* nothing. If there *was* an entanglement in Frank's life, he would still be kind to Violet, and she wanted him.

"This is the 12th; what do you say to the 20th or 21st?" he said.

"Oh," said Frank, with consternation; "no, not then. There's—there's the Umballa tournament on the 18th."

"I forgot; I suppose you couldn't get out of that?" said Sir John, determined not to recognize any strangeness in Frank's manner.

"No, I couldn't possibly," said Fluffy. "It wouldn't be fair to the other fellows—I couldn't possibly."

"Then, say the 30th. That will leave you a full week more, and give you very pleasant weather for getting into Kashmir."

"But, Violet," said Frank desperately, "won't she think we are hurrying her? What will she say?"

"We can't delay because of the hot weather," said Sir John.

Frank had no answer ready. Indeed, if the thing were to be done at all, there was every reason against delay, and he only clutched at excuses through an instinct which he knew was foolish.

He pulled himself together, with a sudden fear

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lest Sir John should suspect what he had suspected long ago.

"I will ask Violet if the 30th would suit her," he said; "I don't want her to think I am hurrying her. But the 30th would do very well."

At the bottom of his heart he clung to a hope that Violet would refuse to be married in this summary manner.

But she did not; nothing and nobody interfered to help him against himself.

Violet's happy confidence in him, her pleasure in the idea of seeing Kashmir with him, her ignorance of the full gravity of her illness, all struck as so many reproaches.

"When I am better," she said often, prefacing some happy plan for the future, and each time the words cut him like a knife.

Perhaps she noticed the pain in his face, for once she began: "And when I am better we must go up the valleys——" and then stopped, hesitated, and added softly: "You must not worry about me, dear; I can see you are worrying. You went to see the doctors about me this morning, didn't you? Dr. Wilson told mother. But never mind what anybody says—you will make we well."

Frank had no answer ready; he turned his face away, with a pretext of arranging her pillows, but Violet caught his hand and stroked it softly with her thin fingers.

"I *know*, Frank," she said, "I *feel* I shall get well

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when I have you. Think of me getting a little and a little better every day——”

A fit of coughing shook her, and saved him from an answer. But the acute, unusual look of pain in his face did not escape her.

“He thinks I will not get better,” sprang to her mind, but she could not say it. She could not speak, even to him, of the cold fear of death which sometimes shook her. But she could not die—her intense longing to live must prevent it. It could not be that she must die, she who loved life so much, who had so many good things waiting for her if she might only take them. She could not die without having lived fully, without having felt to the full all the keenest human joys and sorrows.

She must live for Frank’s sake.

Was it selfish of her to marry him now? Very few men, she thought, would have cared to saddle themselves with an invalid wife, but he was one in a thousand.

It was not the first time she had thought it all over. If she did not get better, there was her money; she wanted Frank to have it.

It would help to make his life endurable till some day another woman made it happy again, for she knew well that he was not of a nature to be constant to her memory forever.

He did not think about the money, but it gladdened her to know she had something to give him.

And would it not make the parting—if parting



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there must be—easier for him, if she belonged to him, and he had the right to care for her? She felt sure it would.

While, if she got well—and she *must* get well, she must and should.

It could not be that she should be married to Frank, and *then* die!



A week? Go to!  
Each separate day sums up a century,  
Each hour becomes a lifelong agony,  
And every single second of each hour  
Lives a moon's life.

—*The Beggar's Comedy.*



## CHAPTER XVII

“THE marriage which has been arranged between Lord Francis Bernard Fetherston-Scott, of the 20th Lancers, A.D.C. to the Governor of Rahore, youngest son of the late, and brother of the present, Earl of Barking, and Miss Violet Cooke, elder daughter of Sir John and Lady Cooke, will take place in Rahore on March 30th. Owing to the bride's health, the ceremony will be absolutely private, and the happy pair will leave for Rawal Pindi by the 1 P. M. train, *en route* for Kashmir, where the honeymoon will be spent.

“Lord Francis Fetherston-Scott is well known and extremely popular in Rahore, both as a sportsman and in his social capacity as A.D.C.”

Barbara did not often see the papers, but she came upon this paragraph one morning at the reading-room, and turned so white and dizzy, that an-

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other lady who was sitting near her asked if she was ill, and was curtly repulsed.

Somehow, to see it there, printed coldly and baldly in the paper, made it harder to bear.

Her Frank seemed all at once removed from her among all these grand people.

And she began to feel that Violet might not be so ill after all; the paper alluded to it so slightly.

"The happy pair!" Just as if they had been an ordinary bride and bridegroom!

"The happy pair!"

Jealousy stabbed Barbara's heart. How dared they write that of her husband and any other woman?

Supposing Violet were not so ill as everybody thought—supposing she were to get better? Supposing Frank ever forgot that the marriage was only to be a nominal one?

Barbara winced as each unbearable thought stung her.

It was one of the many times that fortnight when she felt that she could not bear it—that she *must* ask Frank to give it up. But she never did.

Frank went to Umballa on the 17th. Barbara was inclined to feel hurt at his leaving her, when they had so short a time to spend together, but he told her passionately that he must go, he should go mad if he stayed.

"It is torture," he said. "You don't know *what* it is, to be there with Violet and them all. To hear

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her tell me that I shall make her well and pity me for being so anxious about her, and to listen to the others making plans for our journey and our marriage. I must get away from it all."

So he went, and when he had gone it was better for everybody, even for Barbara, who had not to hear of Violet, and what she had said and done, every day.

The arrangements for the marriage and for the journey to Kashmir went on more easily, too, without Frank's white face and listless presence.

He was to marry Violet, have his debts paid, and take his ponies to Kashmir, but he scarcely feigned an interest in any of these things.

Even Lady Cooke noticed and spoke once to Sir John about him.

"I am not happy about Frank," she said. "I don't think you are doing right in pressing this marriage."

"Why, what is the matter with him?" said Sir John sharply. "You are unreasonable; you expect him to look as happy as if Violet was well and they were marrying under the best possible conditions."

"I am sure you are doing wrong in pressing the marriage," Lady Cooke repeated.

"I don't know what you call 'pressing the marriage,'" said Sir John testily. "I have done nothing without Frank's full consent."

But he was by no means at ease in his mind, and Frank's absence was a real relief.

When he had gone, there grew to be quite an

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interest and a little pleasure in arranging details of the journey, packing and collecting things for the adornment of the house in Kashmir.

Lady Cooke woke up to interest, and Major Peterson became so infected with the worldliness of the atmosphere, that he was once seen to take up and read a newspaper, with an apologetic remark that he "might as well see how things were going in this dream."

Violet was absolutely content. She had had a happy, easy life, surrounded by love and care, which she had accepted and returned unquestionably, as she accepted and returned Frank's now.

Her love for him was not, perhaps, very passionate, but it was true and tender, and quite unexacting.

Hers was an essentially simple nature, and she had never had another lover. Frank's care and remorseful devotion satisfied her.

It is of course possible, and even probable, that had she been well and strong, her eyes would have been opened; indeed, this must have happened, as Frank's dejection would have been unaccounted for.

As it was, she was full of gentle plans to reassure him about her health, and each transparent device made his shame heavier.

It did not occur to her to resent his going to Umballa, as Barbara had been inclined to do. She recognized, as a matter of course, the serious nature of claims connected with polo, and she felt ungrudg-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

ingly that ten days' freedom from being an invalid's attendant would be good for him.

He should not spend all day by her side in Kashmir, she was resolved.

Violet had known Fluffy when she was a child, and the five years' difference between them had made her look up to him with reverence as a man. She had still something of the same feeling toward him.

She admired and bowed down before him, accepting everything he said as right and wise quite unquestioningly, in a way which was both comic and pathetic to any one who knew Fluffy.

The affectionate, constrained letters he wrote to her from Umballa were to her all that letters should be, and she undoubtingly received his constant apologies for their shortness and signs of hurry. It was natural that he should not have much time to spare, and she did not know that he made rough copies of these hasty letters, and took some trouble to arrange a natural mistake or a blot.

Frank felt it was hard he should have to write at all. He was trying his best to forget, to drive everything but the present hour out of his head, and there were actually times when he succeeded.

He did not want to have either Barbara or Violet forced into his thoughts, and only wrote two miserable letters to the former, letters which in their passion of love and grief would have opened Violet's eyes indeed had she seen them.

He came back on the 28th, and that evening he

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

and Barbara had a meeting, in which long pauses filled the place of too difficult speech, and almost every spoken word gave pain.

"We are to be married at eleven, in the drawing-room," said Frank, and the "we" gave Barbara an acute, unreasonable pang.

"There are some wedding presents," he said bitterly; "what will you give me, Barbara? It will be only natural in your near relation to the bridegroom, and as you may be said to have arranged the match——"

He laughed.

"It is coming very near," said Barbara in a low voice.

"Well, you wanted it. I have got you rooms in Murree—you see, it is easy enough—I have plenty of money now."

"Don't speak like that," said Barbara sharply.

"You can come up to Murree next week—not now; it would never do to intrude on our bridal happiness," Frank went on in the same sneering tone.

"You are cruel," said Barbara, sobbing.

"Do you think I don't suffer as much at least as you do?" Frank's bitter composure broke down. "It is that I can't bear it—I *cannot* bear it!" he said.

"But it is too late to do anything else," said Barbara.



So the old life is lost, I know!  
The new? 'Tis thine, not mine. My own,  
If thou shouldst leave me lonely now,  
I must be hopelessly alone.



## CHAPTER XVIII

THE last day dragged to everybody, as is the way of last days. There was nothing left to be done, but at the same time it was impossible to go on just as usual, and a restlessness, a desire to get it all finished and decided, hung over everybody, even Frank and Barbara. Everybody felt it would be better when there was no chance of going back.

In the morning Violet's temperature suddenly flew up to a hundred, the doctor was sent for, and a suggestion of putting off the marriage held Frank for an hour in unbearable suspense. Was he, at this very latest moment, to gain at least a respite?

But the doctor unhesitatingly rejected the idea, and said that as matters had gone so far, the sooner the marriage was over the better; and Violet was quite herself again in the afternoon.

Her mother had packed "Christian Science" pamphlets in every corner of her boxes and among her clothes; she had urged the reading of them upon



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

her, and was responsible for the sudden rise in her temperature, though Violet had not said so.

Lady Cooke had a formed project in her mind of joining her daughter in Kashmir, later on, where she would not have her husband to oppose her, but only Frank, whom she believed herself able to influence.

It was the prospect of this that had made her accept her daughter's marriage so readily.

Sir John was full of misgivings. He was not a man to be easily approached, and nobody had ventured to give him a hint of what all Rahore was talking about, but he suspected enough to make him feel that his own conduct was not free from reproach. If it made Violet happy, he told himself he did not care.

When he went to her room that evening to say good-night, he saw that she was happy.

She was lying on her couch, with some of the small wedding presents, sent by Rahore residents, on the table near her, and Baby, on the floor beside her, was nursing Victoria Henrietta Frank, and relating a wonderful story at the top of her voice.

Sir John was a little moved out of his outward reserve, and he kissed his daughter and sat down beside her, feeling himself unwontedly at ease.

"Violet," he said, "are you happy in the prospect of to-morrow?"

"Indeed, I am," she said softly; "the only thing I sometimes fear is that Frank may be sorry some day for having tied himself to an invalid wife."

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"But you are not afraid that *you* will be sorry?"

"*I?* Sorry for having married Frank!" said Violet, with shining eyes.

"Then I am not sorry, either," said Sir John to himself.

"I think I am the very luckiest girl in the world," said Violet, "and I will try so hard to please Frank always, and to be a good wife to him."

Poor little girl! Her father turned his eyes away from her, with sharp pain; there was such a short time before her to be any man's wife.

"You think yourself lucky?" he said.

"Oh, father, there aren't two Franks in the world!" said Violet, with a sudden happy laugh.

"I always meant to marry Frank mineself," said Baby reproachfully.

"And I am afraid you will never be able to find anybody else as good, poor Babs," said Violet.

"Never mind; I don't much care who I marry, so that I have lots of children," said Baby. "I shall have ten or eighteen boys, all the same age, and I shall call them all Frank."

She paused, reflecting, it was to be hoped, on the confusion such an arrangement would engender, and then added thoughtfully:

"And when do you think of having a little baby, Violet?"

The words sent Sir John away with an ache at his heart, which smothered any amusement. Poor Violet!

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But Violet did not pity herself. She lay there, thinking happy thoughts about Frank, and how good life would be when she got better and could devote herself to him in return for all his care and love.

Frank was so good. Since she had been so much more fortunate than any other girl in the world, in that she had gained his love, she would do her best to make herself worthy of him.

As she lay there, thinking and planning with a happy heart, the man she was thinking and planning for was standing in a bare hotel room, not half a mile off, trying to say good-by.

The day had been one long strain, and now Barbara had broken down utterly and lay in his arms, shaken by an uncontrollable fit of sobbing.

"You love only me, darling; say it again," she whispered brokenly.

"I love you better than any one or anything on the earth, and better than God in Heaven!" said Frank passionately. "Oh, my sweetheart, why did we think we could bear it?"

"I wish—I *wish* we never had!"

"As if any poverty—as if *anything* could be as bad as this! My own, it is not too late yet. Let us give it up, and not break both our hearts!"

"No; we must go through with it now," said Barbara, drawing her breath sharply.

Give it up? If they only could! But to give it up now would mean ruin for Frank. They had gone too far to recede.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

As their time grew shorter, Barbara's sobbing was hushed, and they stood together with white faces.

"I shall not see you again before you leave?" she said.

"No," said Frank; "I might come to-morrow morning, but it's better not—I couldn't face it all afterward."

"You will write?"

"Often," he said, and there was a long silence; words were so useless.

"I shall come and see you in Murree," he said; "I *must*. Darling, how are we going to live without each other?"

He held her away from him, looking into her face eagerly.

"I want to be able to see it when I haven't got you," he said.

They had said everything there was to say so often, and the prolonging of the parting meant nothing but pain, and yet it was hard to end it.

"Darling, I had better go," he said at last; "this is unbearable. Let me say good-by."

He drew her close, kissing her dear lips, her cheeks, her eyes.

"Promise that you will love me always as you do now," said Barbara, her great, haunting fear prompting her words.

"I swear that I shall love you to my dying day as I do now," said Frank, with trembling lips. "May

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God forsake me if I ever forsake you, my own love!"

"God *has* forsaken us," said Barbara; "this is a wicked thing we are going to do. But, Frank, Frank, remember always you are mine, my own."

"Good-by!" he said.

The wrench had come. A moment later Barbara found herself standing alone, looking blindly out into the darkness.

It was all over, and though she, and no other, was Frank's wife, she felt more utterly alone than she had ever done in her life.

At the bottom of her heart lay a haunting, unacknowledged doubt of her husband.

She threw herself into the chair Frank had been sitting in, burying her face in the cushion, with a strange physical pain at her heart, turning her faint and sick.

"I can't, I *can't* bear it," she gasped, "I *cannot* bear it!"

Next day Frank was married to Violet Cooke.

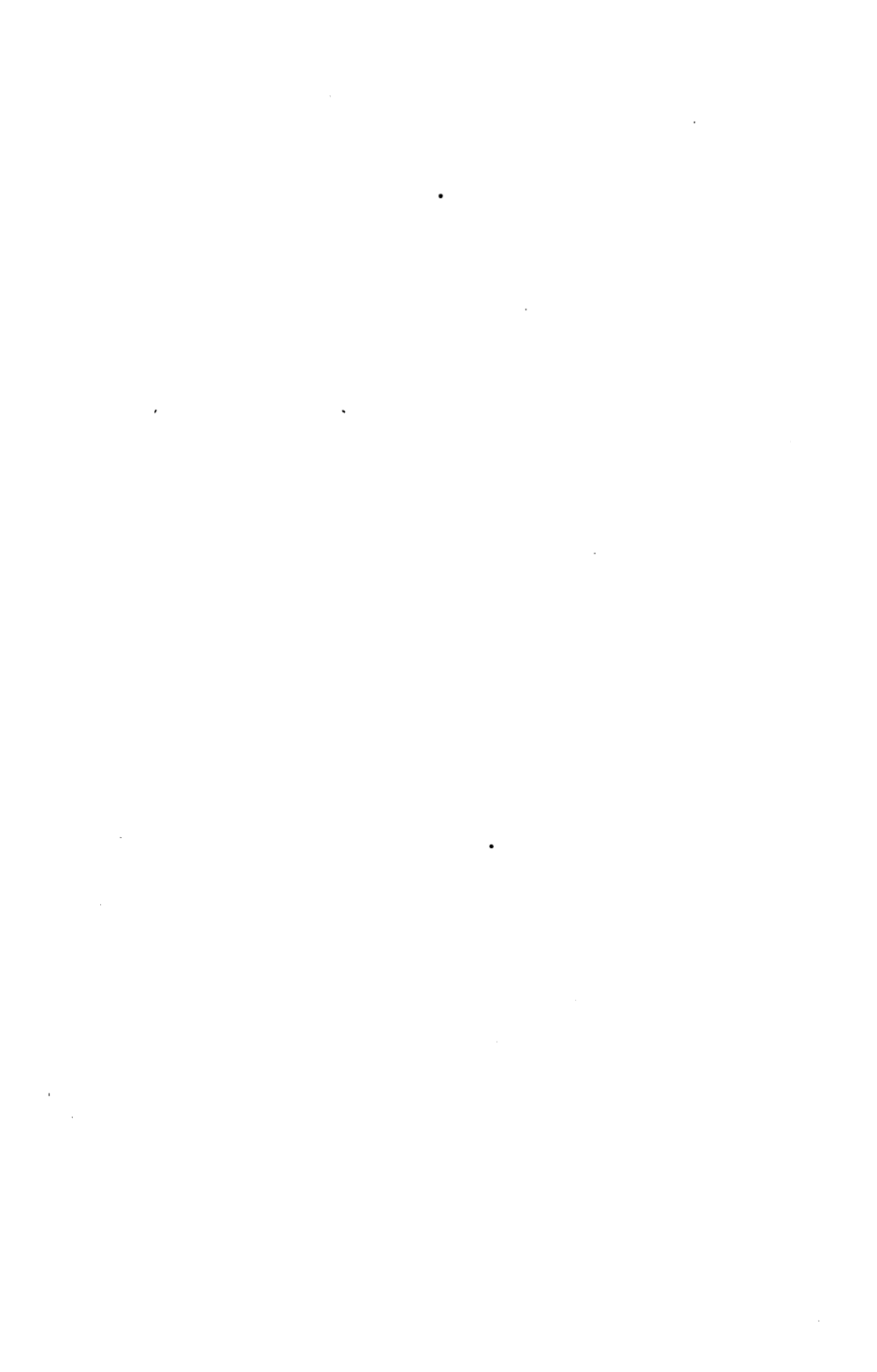


The man's power goes into the thing he does, whether it is a word or a deed, and a deed once done is done to all eternity: that is how he gets his immortality, and is proved to have been good or bad.



## Part

## II





And on the stream whose inconstant bosom  
Was pranked, under boughs of embowering blossom,  
With golden and green light, slanting through  
Their heaven of many a tangled hue.

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,  
And starry river-buds glimmered by,  
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance  
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.



## CHAPTER

### I

THE boat swept on through the rushes with a regular swishing sound.

There was no water to be seen, nothing but high green rushes, framed on either side with trees, weighed down by clustering white blossom. The undefined line where the river ended and the bank began blazed with purple and white lilies. Brilliant blue orioles darted to and fro, and a kingfisher supported himself on a waving reed and watched for prey.

Above was the brightest of blue skies, and a fresh, sweet-smelling breeze rustled the reeds and brought little showers of white blossom floating down.

The long, narrow boat, with its shelter of matting, and the four picturesque natives, with their moving



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paddles and their monotonous chant, seemed at one with the surroundings.

Violet lay among piles of cushions with her happy eyes turned, sometimes to Frank, sometimes leaving his face to rest on the white gleam of the fruit trees or follow the rapid flight of an oriole.

They had been silent for some time, and when she did speak, it was in a hushed voice of pleasure.

"Don't let them go fast," she said.

"But I am afraid of having you out too late."

"What does it matter? Nobody is ill in Fairyland. Nobody could be ill or sorry here," said Violet softly.

"You foolish child! Are you so happy, dear?" said Frank very kindly.

"Happy?" said Violet; "I feel as if you and I had got the most beautiful world for our two selves, a world where nothing could ever go wrong, and where everybody must be as happy as we are—that is, if there *is* anybody else. Please let us go very slowly, Frank; I don't want to see anything but flowers and trees and *you* sooner than I can help."

"That's all very well," said Frank, "but think of Miss Magrath, raging on dry land. Haven't I dared enough already in taking you off without her knowledge?"

"Frank! How can you say such a name as Magrath out here?" said Violet reproachfully.

"Do you think 'Frank' is any better, then?"

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"It is to me," Violet said; "it means everything that is best and truest and most glad."

"You silly girl! Perhaps Magrath means all that to somebody else," said Frank.

Violet's happiness was infectious; he could not help being happy too, sometimes, though he felt it a treachery to Barbara.

But his life was so entirely new to him, his surroundings were so dreamlike, and, as Violet said, they seemed so cut off from the rest of the world, that his high spirits would rise and make him forget.

Violet was a sweet little companion, and always pleased and happy, and though he did not love her, it was pleasant to him, as it always had been, to be admired and made much of, and at times he forgot how little he deserved it. The old life, and even Barbara, seemed very far away on these summer evenings in Kashmir.

It was six weeks since they had left Rahore, and May was drawing to a close. They had stayed at first in one of the Maharajah's guest-houses on the Bund in Srinagar, but later had heard of a large, vacant house, four miles away, on the Dal Lake, and they had driven out to see it and both been charmed.

It had been the centre of a jam and fruit farm, given up owing to transport difficulties, and the big, neglected garden, and big, neglected house appealed at once to both Frank and Violet.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

The doctor also gave his consent to the change, and they were as happy as a couple of children over it.

There were big chenar trees in the garden, and cosy spots in their shade for Violet's chair, where she could lie and read, or talk to Frank, or eat strawberries and cream; he could always find a fragrant nosegay to greet her at breakfast, and there were two little donkeys loose in the garden, who would come and ask for bread, but preferred cake.

They were quite out of the world, and yet, if Frank wanted to go into Srinagar for tennis or polo, he could bicycle or ride there very easily, and there was the boat if he was in no hurry.

And Violet had only to walk or be carried in her dandy down a few terraced steps and along a wide, shady path, and to step into the boat moored at the landing place and float away over the Dal Lake with Frank, and this was the greater joy, because so recently attained. The river at Srinagar had not been so absolutely fascinating, and she had only been allowed such short occasional half-hours.

But this was the first time they had ventured to escape from the stern rule of Miss Magrath, the nurse, and go out by themselves, and they were absurdly delighted at the thought of her consternation when she found the seat under the chenars empty.

"I am so happy, so happy," said Violet, and she leaned back, one hand in Frank's, the other hanging

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over the side of the boat, with the water rippling past through her thin fingers.

"When you are a little stronger I must see if I can't get a rowboat from the club, and take you out myself," said Frank.

"But this is so *suitable*—I like this," said Violet.

"But I want to kiss you," said Frank, laughing, "when you say you are happy and look such a sweet little girl; and I can't with four pairs of eyes behind us."

They had got out of the rushes, and into the Dal Lake, which stretched smoothly before them, with a background of snow-covered mountains, standing out against the sky, in sharp contrast to the sunshine round them, and a foreground of floating gardens, dotted here and there over the water, shutting out the green Nasim Bagh in the distance. To the right, Lalla Rookh's palace showed whitely against the hillside, and close at hand, a wooded promontory hid their home, with an artist's tent pitched among the trees.

One or two heavy native boats laden with stuff for the floating gardens, or stakes for their support, drew past, poled or paddled along, generally by a woman, with dark Kashmiri eyes and gleaming white teeth. Sometimes a tiny child put all its strength into help, and paddled with the best of them, learning to paddle as another child learns to walk.

Once they passed a house-boat, being poled and

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towed out to the Nasim Bagh by a dozen chanting natives, while the owners sat luxuriously in long chairs in the bow.

"I wish we could go on forever," said Violet.

"The mist will be rising in another half hour," Frank answered practically, "and you must be snugly indoors. I'll just ride in for the letters, and then come back and play piquet with you."

"Never mind the letters," said Violet; "they'll do in the morning."

"Oh, I want exercise," said Frank carelessly.

"I never saw any one so keen about letters," said Violet, laughing; "it's enough to make any wife suspicious."

And at her words a sudden cloud fell on Frank.

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up  
As a Maenad, its moonlight-colored cup  
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,  
Gazed through the clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,  
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;  
And all rare blossoms from every clime  
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

## CHAPTER

### II

“DON’T you think peacock-blue coats, with a kind of dream blue for their belts and pug-garees,” said Violet.

Frank was in a long chair by her side under the chenars, smoking and reading, in the extreme of comfort. Violet had been reading, too, but her eyes had been drawn away from her book to her husband, as he lay, his white flannel-clad legs crossed, his straw hat tilted over his face, a very good and pleasant sight to her admiring eyes.

“What *are* you talking about?” he said lazily.

It was a lazy day, just warm enough to make one feel disinclined to move, and it was very still out there in the garden; not a leaf was stirring.

“The boatmen, of course,” said Violet; “we can’t always go about with our boatmen so disreputable, or they’ll take us for Rajahs.”

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"And so you want to clothe them in dream blue and peacock blue? Very nice, no doubt, but what kind of blues may they happen to be?"

Violet was deeply serious.

"Peacock blue isn't blue at all, it's green," she said; "but some shades of green and some shades of blue agree so well. We must send a message to Guffara Joo to bring out stuffs."

"So, with all your romance, you are longing for shopping," said Frank; "Vi, I am ashamed of you. I thought we were going to dream our lives away here."

"It's all part of it," said Violet.

"Part of what?" said Frank.

"Part of having everything beautiful round us," said Violet earnestly, and he laughed outright.

"Do you contemplate making the boatmen beautiful?" he said.

"I want this to be a perfect time in our lives to remember," said Violet softly; "it can't be like this always, of course; that would be idle and selfish. But to have a perfect time to remember is good for anybody."

"It is perfect to you?" said Frank.

"It is better than anything I ever dreamed of, to have you all to myself, and to find out every day more and more how good and dear you are. Frank, I do like you to look at me like that—you have such lovely eyes."

Frank laughed, and absolutely reddened a little.

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"You are a funny little girl," he said.

Violet went on very seriously.

"I was watching the donkeys just now, and thinking how much Baby would have liked to be here, and that we could have had a red leather saddle made to fit the biggest one, like the one the little girl in Srinagar had. And all at once I felt that I couldn't bear to have any one here but you and me; do you feel like that, Frank?"

"You and me and Miss Magrath," said Frank; "she completes the circle, and here she comes—a sun hat doesn't suit her, dear, does it?"

"Let's get away before she comes, and go and see how the apricots are ripening," said Violet.

The apricots were not ripening at all; they were still hard, green lumps; but the apricot walk by the river was very fascinating.

Violet, proud of being able to do so much, would not even lean on Frank's arm.

"I want to tell you something," she said mysteriously; "I am planning to get rid of Miss Magrath."

"We can't, dear," said Frank; "we could never get anybody else here, and she's a good nurse, though I admit she doesn't suit the scenery."

"But, Frank," said Violet, "do, do listen. Miller would be quite enough. Now, I might as well not have a maid; she's always attending to Miss Magrath. Miller would do quite well now; she would, indeed."



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Violet's cheeks had flushed suddenly, and she slid her hand into Frank's, and looked at him with entreaty.

"I do so want to be alone with you," she said; "I want to sit up to dinner, and to have it alone with you, and to have a real honeymoon like other people, with the one thing that isn't perfect taken away."

"Poor Miss Magrath! To be the one thing that isn't perfect!" said Frank, laughing to hide a growing embarrassment. "Vi, dear, it's impossible—out of the question. It is not as if one could get a trained nurse at a moment's notice up here."

"But you don't see how much better I am," said Violet; "Frank, can't you see how much better I am?"

She gave his hand a little impatient shake, and drew back, standing for him to look at her.

He felt that she *must* see the sudden horror that leapt to his eyes, and fancied the lip-smile he forced to hide it even more betraying.

If Violet were to get better! It flashed upon him now how far she had advanced in those last weeks, advanced by such small, imperceptible steps, that till now he had not realized she had advanced at all. She walked more, sat up later, coughed less often.

But these temporary improvements were common enough, he had often heard so; there was nothing to be feared really, though the shock of her words had turned him dizzy.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

The cruelty of his thoughts, with the poor little girl facing him, full of the happiness she believed herself to be giving him, seemed too detestable. He drew her to him, and kissed her remorsefully, and she nestled contentedly into his arms.

"Are you happy?" she said. "You won't worry any more now, dear, will you?"

"No," said Frank, "of course not."

"My God, what will come of it all!" he said to himself.



When shaws beene sheene, and shradds full fayre,  
And leaves both large and longe,  
Itt is merrye walking in the fayre forrest  
To heare the small birdes songe.



## CHAPTER

### III

VIOLET stood knee-deep among purple and white lilies, and Frank gathered them for her in great armfuls.

They grew in masses under the chenar trees in the Shalimar gardens, and though two of the boatmen, in their new garb of dream and peacock blue, were laden with spoil, what they had taken made no visible diminution.

"Do you think Miss Magrath would like some for her room?" said Violet.

"As a peace-offering?" Frank answered, laughing.

"Yes, I do feel it was selfish not to bring her," said Violet; "but when she comes, you have to sit opposite me in the boat instead of beside me, and she always says: 'Lady Francis, I think it would not be prudent to risk' this, that, or the other."

"She wouldn't let you stand there, gathering lilies," said Frank, "and perhaps I oughtn't to,

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either. Come, I'll spread your cloak on the bank, and we'll sit down."

"Among the lilies," said Violet, "and where we can get the sweet apple-tree breath."

She was completely happy, enjoying to the full every lazy minute of the hour they spent under the trees.

The blaze of color, from sky and flowers and birds, was in itself a joy to her, and the drowsy insect-buzz and soft, warm summer air.

Frank could not resist her entreaties to stay a little and yet a little longer, and because of this, by the time their long row home was ended, the sun was setting behind the snow mountains, and a distinct chill had crept into the air.

Miss Magrath, waiting for them anxiously at the end of the garden, was reproachful in the extreme, but Violet persisted, with a sudden, uncontrollable shiver, that she had enjoyed herself immensely, and was none the worse.

A little later, when the nurse, unheeding remonstrance, had put her to bed, in a nest of hot-water bottles, her shivering stopped, and burning heat came in its stead.

Frank went off at a gallop for the doctor, with the eager words of reassurance Violet had not forgotten to say ringing in his ears. She had persisted at first that she was quite well, and later, as this became impossible, had found reason after reason, other than her delayed return, to account for

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her illness, obviously with a brave effort to prevent Frank from blaming himself.

But he did blame himself, sorely and bitterly, as he sat in his room with the door open, watching for the doctor to leave Violet.

Was the time he and Barbara were waiting—hoping—for, come at last?

The full brutality of the hope was plain to him, and yet that it was and must be what they hoped for was undeniable.

Barbara's last letter had said so plainly. Even while he read it her anxious questions about Violet's health had grated upon him, and now he could not bear to remember them. It had seemed to him then that silence would have been best, and Barbara's passionate regret for what they had done, the reckless despair showing plainly through everything she wrote, had troubled him and brought him a certain sense of injustice.

It was she who had planned this thing, and there was no use in writing now that she felt every day more desperate.

As he sat there, waiting to hear if Violet was to live or die, his position struck him in its full hideousness. He had always refused to face it, putting it away from him as he had put away unpleasant things all his life, but with Violet ill, perhaps dying, upstairs, a persistent thought forced itself upon him and would not be ignored. Did he want her to die?

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The doctor, when he left Violet's room at last, was absolutely startled by the look of utter, hopeless misery on Frank's face, a misery which seemed beyond the occasion and out of proportion.

"You have been alarming yourself unnecessarily, Lord Francis," he said; "of course, to a lady in your wife's state of health a chill is a serious matter, but thanks to the prompt precautions taken, I hope, and think, this will have no ill effect. We may hope for much in Lady Francis's case."

Frank's face hardly changed. What had he to hope for? For Violet's own sake what could he hope for?

"I must say I am surprised, as much as I am gratified, at the progress Lady Francis has made since coming here," said the doctor, feeling very kindly toward this anxious young husband. "With the same unremitting care we may hope for much. I will come out to-morrow, and Lady Francis must, of course, remain in bed for some days, but I think I may venture to say that there is no cause for great uneasiness at present, and I hope to find her almost herself again to-morrow. If you have any special reason for anxiety you must let me know at once."

A sudden thought struck Frank, and he found himself straining every muscle to prevent an incongruous smile. It was a vision of the doctor's face if he confided to him his special cause for anxiety.

Violet recovered from her chill more steadily and quickly even than the doctor had expected. Supreme

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content and the strongest desire to get well may not be medically acknowledged cures for diseased lungs, but they help more than many medicines.

Dr. Strong told Frank plainly one day that with constant care he saw every reason to believe that some years of life at least were before his wife, noting the absence of the irritable restlessness and craving for excitement so common in consumption, as a good sign.

This symptom seemed to have transferred itself to Frank, who was no longer able to shut out everything but the present as he had done at first. The prospect of Violet lingering on as an invalid for years, Barbara's miserable letters, the thought of what she would feel when she knew what he did not dare to tell her, all these things would not be driven out of his head. He longed for Barbara, to whom he could speak of his troubles, and the ring of increasing desperation in her letters made them more pain than pleasure.

She was ill and very unhappy, she wrote, her long, straggling handwriting covering many pages. Did Frank ache for her as she did for him; when was he coming to see her, and above all, how much longer was this life to last?

"If this goes on what will become of us?" she wrote one day. "We shall have to give it up. Darling, if I ask you to come to me, and throw everything and everybody else aside, will you do it?"

Frank found it difficult to answer these letters,

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with their constant entreaty to come to her; she ought, he thought, to have understood for herself the difficulties, the necessity of finding an explanation that would satisfy Violet.

He wrote at last, with a trace of sharpness through many loving words.

"She knew, she must know, that he longed to go to her as much as she could possibly long to have him, but as they had begun, they must carry this thing through. To give it up now would mean *absolute ruin* to him"—he underlined the words—"and under no circumstances would he consent to make Violet suffer for what was his fault and Barbara's. They must go on as they had begun, or all they had suffered would be worse than useless."

He wrote in a flash of indignation, more resolutely than it was natural to him to write, and this letter was followed by two days of unwonted silence from Barbara.

The third afternoon some people they knew came out from Srinagar to tea, and stayed so long that Frank was burning with impatience to ride in to the post for his delayed letter before they left.

He was obliged to walk down the garden with them at the last, and see them into their boat, and when he got back to the house, having made up his mind to ride in on his waiting pony without the delay of changing his flannels, Violet met him, standing in the open French window of the drawing-room.



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"Here's a letter for you," she said.

Frank felt himself changing color.

"Don't come out," he said, trying to speak lightly; "how has the post come? I was just going to ride in."

"I saw those people were going to stay, and I knew you liked your letters, so I sent one of the syces," said Violet, "as a surprise. But you don't look very pleased, dear."

Her face fell a little, but Frank was too full of his own thoughts to be observant.

"Give me the letter," he said, almost roughly. To see Violet standing there, with Barbara's letter in her hand, was more than he could endure, and he made a hasty determination somehow or other to prevent such a thing happening again.

Violet put her hands behind her back with a laugh.

"Manners, Frank," she said lightly; "you must ask more nicely than that if you want it."

It was a bit of childish teasing, which to a man who loved his wife would only have been sweet. To Frank, at another time, Violet's pathetic little figure, the weakness in the voice that spoke so gaily, the thinness of the bright face, the very fact of her making merry over the letter which meant such bitter earnest, would have been infinitely touching. Just then it was irritating to the last degree.

"Don't be silly, Vi. Do give me my letter," he said sharply.

She gave it to him at once, with a sudden shadow

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on her face, which he did not pause to notice. He turned away abruptly, and went to his room, his annoyance that this letter should have been given to Violet outweighing every other feeling.

But once alone, he could only think of Barbara, his darling Barbara, and what she would say to account for her two days' offended silence, and he tore the letter open, kissing the paper her fingers had touched, and feeling her so much the nearer.

Then the shortness of the letter, the irregularity of the writing, struck upon him suddenly.

"My darling," she wrote, "come to me. I am very ill, and so alone that I don't know how to bear it. Your last letter was very cruel, and drove me to despair, but you did not know. What I have done was all there was left to do, and I could not ruin you. But I am very ill, and I lie here, hour after hour, trying to bear it, and see you with her, and it drives me mad. What would you feel if it were I, not she, that died?"

Frank read the letter with a white, shocked face, the last sentence driving out all that had gone before, in the sharp fear it brought.

He did not stop to puzzle over her incoherent words, he thought of nothing but that Barbara was ill, very ill, and that, cost what it might, he must go to her at once.

Violet might think, suspect what she liked, delay was impossible.

He thought at first of going into Srinagar that

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instant, and trying to get a special tonga, to travel all night, but finally rejected the idea. A seat in the mail tonga, starting at five in the morning, would mean little delay, and would not be so absolutely betraying as the wild haste of his first project.

But go he must. Barbara was very ill, and he was not with her, and she might die—she said so herself.

Frank hastily scribbled a telegram, telling her that he was starting, and sent it, and a note to the tonga office, to Srinagar with a syce.

Then he dressed for dinner, made a pretence of eating it, and went up to Violet's room with such a changed face that he could not hope it would escape notice.

"I am nearly out of my mind with toothache," he said, feeling himself grow crimson as he told the lie.

"Toothache? You poor boy!"

Violet sprang up from her chair, and went to him at once.

"I *am* so sorry," she said; "how suddenly it has come on; is it very bad, dear?"

"I have it for the last day or two, but I did not want to worry you."

"And that is why you haven't been quite yourself," said Violet reproachfully. "Frank, that wasn't good of you. Have you done anything, tried anything? Let me send for Dr. Strong; they say he knows a good deal about dentistry."

"No; there's nothing I have more horror of than a doctor messing about with my teeth," said Frank

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hastily. He was a bad actor, but Violet was not suspicious.

She was full of sympathy and suggestions, and Miss Magrath was called in, and had many suggestions too, though not, perhaps, so much sympathy.

When she had gone to her room, to get toothache plaisters and oil of cloves, Violet came to him, laying her soft cheek against the one where the toothache was supposed to be and filling him with shame.

"Violet," he said, "if it doesn't get better to-night I think I shall go to Murree and see a dentist to-morrow."

"To Murree!" said Violet blankly, and then her own disappointment was swallowed up in a certainty that Frank must be very bad to think of taking such a journey.

She urged him, very sensibly, to see if Dr. Strong could not do something for him first, and Frank, satisfied in that Murree had been mentioned, tried to let the subject drop.

He did not want to say any more to Violet; he had prepared her mind, and he intended to go off in the morning, leaving a note of explanation.

He had to promise to try steaming his face, when he went to bed, and suddenly burst out laughing as he promised. It was so painful, and yet so completely absurd.



But I look on thee—on thee—  
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,  
Hearing oblivion beyond memory  
As one who sits and gazes from above  
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.



## CHAPTER

### IV

**F**RANK stole out of the house like a thief at four in the morning.

He left a note with the bearer to give to Violet, having spent nearly an hour writing it, and long before she read it, he would be far on the road to Murree and Barbara.

Poor little Violet! She would be very much disappointed, and worse, very anxious, about him and his imaginary toothache.

Frank, riding into Srinagar through the cool morning air, with the gathering light widening every moment his surrounding of dusty road and dew-soaked grass, was conscious of distinct relief in the thought of a few days without the constant sense of shame Violet's presence brought.

With Barbara he could be himself, he could speak out his thoughts and fears, and frankness was his natural inclination.

All through the long tonga journey he thought of

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Barbara, thought of her as hour after hour passed, and, relay after relay, the ponies were started with more or less difficulty, and galloped their stage; thought of her during the short night at Garhi dak bungalow, and next morning when, once more on the road, Murree grew nearer and nearer.

The last part of the journey dragged worst of all, when they had crossed the bridge that left Kashmir behind them, and faced the long, steep climb from Kohala to Murree.

Two or three pairs of ponies jibbed badly, once causing a delay of quite half an hour.

Frank scarcely thought of the last time he had passed over the road with Violet, intensely happy in being with him, and in the glorious, changing scenery, which was always enough in itself to make her happy. But he could only think of Barbara.

How was she? How would she meet him after two months' endless separation?

The telegram he had asked for at Garhi had told him she was better and longing for him, and his hopes rose every moment.

They were a little late in getting into Murree, and it was past one o'clock, but Frank, though he had breakfasted at an unearthly hour, was much too excited to think of hunger.

When he found himself at the veranda of Powell's Hotel he had scarcely breath left to ask for Mrs. Francis, and was quite beyond any fear of being recognized.

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And at last he and she were together again, and there were a few minutes of blind excitement in which they forgot everything else.

Barbara could not speak; her loneliness, her fear, her misery of jealousy, all suddenly changed to intense joy, took away her words.

"My poor darling," said Frank passionately, "my own sweetheart! Have you been so miserable?—have you wanted me so?"

He put her away from him to look at her, and then drew her close in his arms again.

"My own, how ill you look," he said.

Barbara was very white, and the loss of her usual healthy color made her look almost plain. It had not occurred to her to make the best of herself; Barbara was scarcely womanlike in her indifference to appearances.

Her hair was ill brushed, her dressing-gown was shabby, and the lace at the neck and sleeves was soiled. Frank, used to Violet's dainty invalidism, felt it all in a flash, while realizing the injustice of comparison. Barbara was ill and alone, and had no one to do anything for her.

Above all, he loved her.

"My dearest, I can't bear to see you look so ill," he said. "What has been the matter? You never told me, and I have been so anxious." Barbara still clung to him speechlessly. Suddenly, as he held her, he felt her grow a dead weight in his arms.

She did not absolutely faint; when he had laid

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her on the sofa, and distractedly sprinkled her with some unsavory water from a vase of dead flowers which constituted the only adornment of the room, a little color grew gradually into her cheeks and she smiled to him.

"Don't look so frightened," she said in a low voice; "it was only joy."

But Frank, who had always believed her the personification of strength, found her weakness startling.

"You have wanted me so badly?" he said, deeply touched.

"I haven't known how to bear it. And since I knew you were coming it has seemed too much to hope for. I have been so afraid that one of us might die before we met!" said Barbara breathlessly.

"You have been very ill, darling. What was it?" said Frank.

Barbara looked at him, all the passion of her love in her eyes.

She did not idealize Frank, but such as he was, he was everything in the world to her.

"Frank," she said, with a faint hesitation, "you won't be angry with me? There was one thing we never stopped to think of—it was mad of us. A week after you had married *her* the first suspicion came to me—think of that—a week too late!"

Frank had been kneeling by the sofa; he sprang to his feet with a white face.



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"Good God—you don't mean——"

Barbara caught his hands, pressing them to her lips.

"I asked you to come to me—I did ask you! And you said it would ruin you. Darling, darling"—Barbara spoke hurriedly, with passionate entreaty—"it would have meant the end of all we had hoped for. I thought and thought, and there was nothing else to be done."

"You ought to have told me, Barbara. Indeed, you ought to have told me."

"What good would that have done? I was desperate, darling; if you knew how desperate, you would not look at me like that. I did so many things—but I am very strong. At last, there was all one night, I don't know what happened, and next morning the ayah found me and brought a doctor. Frank, don't look at me like that—don't think me wicked—if you think me wicked I shall *die!*"

Her cry of pain reached Frank's brain through the stupefaction her words had brought.

He knelt down beside her again and kissed her.

"My poor Barbara!" he said. He pitied her, and he had not the right to do anything but pity her. It was he who had brought this thing upon her, he acknowledged it, beating down the anger, the disgust, which rose in his mind.

Barbara put her arms round his neck and burst out crying.

"I have been so afraid you would be angry," she

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said, "but if *you* understand, I don't care for anything, for *nothing* while I have you!"

But Frank was saying to himself: "How could she do it? How could any woman do it? How could she be such a *fool* as not to understand me better?"

But, determined to show no anger, he kept his face hidden against her shoulder, and for a few minutes said nothing.

"You are not angry?" said Barbara; and he answered: "No, darling," unhesitatingly, and added: "But I am so sorry for you."

Then he asked her a few questions about her life, gathering from her answers its great dreariness and loneliness, and the intense unpleasantness of her dubious position. Barbara, with no one to speak to and nowhere to go, felt the days hang like lead on her hands, following each other in unbearable sameness.

She had absolutely nothing to do but to sit and eat her jealous heart out, imagining Frank and Violet together.

"And how is she?" she asked presently, when he had drawn a low chair up to the sofa, and sat there, his hand in hers.

The question which she had been longing to put jarred on him at once. He had not made up his mind whether he was going to tell her the truth or not, but found himself temporizing, fearing the despair it would bring her.

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"She is no worse," he said, and found Barbara's eyes were studying his face eagerly. He thought it was to read the answer to her question in his expression, but Barbara wanted to read more than that.

"It is nearly two months," she said, "and the doctors said——"

"Barbara, don't," said Frank; "isn't it bad enough to know what we are waiting for without talking about it?"

"You are beginning to care for her!" said Barbara, in an impulse.

It was a thing she had made up her mind not to say, realizing its imprudence, but her jealousy found words in spite of herself.

Frank flushed angrily.

"I have given you no reason to say that," he said.

"You have, if you won't allow me to speak of her——"

"I only think it is rather an inhuman way of speaking," said Frank coldly.

"Do you love her? Have you been true to me? Oh, I *know* you are changed!" said Barbara, in a wail of despair. Her illness, the hours of jealous misery she had passed through, had weakened her power of restraint. She could not keep her words back, and at the same time, the knowledge that she was acting foolishly added to her misery.

Frank hated scenes, and in her fear of losing his love she knew she was behaving in exactly the way to lose it.

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"I don't think I have given you any cause to say this of me," said Frank; "it is you that have changed. Barbara, you aren't like yourself. Can't you trust me?"

"Oh, I know I am foolish," she said, sobbing hysterically, "but I can't bear to think that she is with you while I am not. Frank, do you love me as much as ever? Have you longed for me as I have longed for you?"

"You know I love you," said Frank earnestly, but a certain sense of damp and disappointment remained with him, though he kissed Barbara, and gave her, again and again, assurance of his love.

"Oh, I wish, I wish," she said, "that we had not done this thing!"

"I wish from my heart that we had not," said Frank.

Barbara turned to him abruptly, drawing his face down to hers.

"Frank," she said, almost in a whisper, "give it up! I thought we could bear it, but we can't! Let us go away now, somewhere, anywhere—where no one will know us. Darling, if you love me, you will listen to me this once! I have tried to bear it—I have, indeed!"

Frank drew away from her, gently but decidedly.

"I thought I had answered this often enough in my letters," he said. "We have not only ourselves to consider. Barbara, there is Violet. God knows,

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I have enough to reproach myself with about her, and she shall not be sacrificed now."

"You love her better than you do me! I know you do!" Barbara burst out.

"Barbara, I can't understand you," Frank said. "I only say we must go on as we have begun, and as we always meant to do. We must wait."

"But she may get better. I know she is getting better!" said Barbara; "I am losing you—God help me, she will take you from me!"

The intense agony of jealousy in her voice made Frank patient.

"You are ill, dear," he said, "or you would not talk so foolishly. Come, you are making our time together miserable; forget all these absurd fancies, and be my own darling wife again."

Barbara was sobbing helplessly.

"I thought we should have been so happy!" she said, "and now we shall never be happy again—never—never!"

"We shall be as happy as ever some day," said Frank, but his heart misgave him.



There is one article absolutely necessary—to  
be ever beloved, one must be ever agreeable.

—LADY MARY W. MONTAGU.



## CHAPTER

### V

FRANK spent the next day with Barbara, but, somehow, their bad beginning left its traces.

If Barbara had waited a day or two, till she was more herself, before sending for him; even, prosaic as it sounds, if he had had lunch before meeting her, it might have been different. But she was so ill, and he so tired and hungry, that neither was in good mood for a meeting which was necessarily a difficult one, though they had neither of them dreamed it would be difficult.

Next day Barbara, who ought to have been in bed, was feeling very ill, but was not wise enough to admit it.

Frank sat with her all day, and there were times when things seemed the same as ever between them; but it was impossible to keep away from awkward subjects, and Barbara could not restrain herself from allusions to Violet, though it hurt her keenly to speak or think of her. She wanted to know every

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smallest detail of Frank's life in Kashmir, and yet she could not bear to hear about it.

When he told her she was unreasonable, she burst into tears, and said she knew she was and he must forgive her, but after this had happened several times it became difficult to forget.

Frank found the day he had expected to think all too short drag not a little, and Barbara saw that he did and tried hopelessly to set things right. But their false position stood between them.

The parting next morning was very painful. Barbara made one last effort to persuade him to stay with her, losing all self-control, and breaking into tears and reproaches which he found it very hard to bear patiently.

She, who had been the strongest, and who had resisted all his suggestions of abandoning their project while it could have been abandoned, seemed to him utterly changed now. He did not realize that it was the result of the breakdown of her splendid health, on the top of dreary weeks in which jealousy had grown into a real disease.

It was with a sense of unacknowledged relief that he found himself once more in the tonga, with his face turned toward Kashmir.

Frank was not in the habit of analyzing his feelings. He knew he felt miserable, utterly disappointed and out of tune, but he did not ask himself why, or if he was disappointed in Barbara.

He simply tried not to think of it all, and was

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very glad there happened to be another man in the tonga to talk to. This was a cheerful youth, off to shoot bear, in the best possible temper with himself and all the world, and Fluffy found his society invigorating, and began to feel less troubled, and more tenderly toward Barbara, before long, so much so that he wrote her a very loving letter from Ghari.

It was quite late when he got home next day, for the tonga did not reach Srinagar till nearly nine in the evening, and then he had a further four-mile ride.

He had expected to find Violet in bed, and was very much surprised to find her waiting for him in the drawing-room, and perhaps not too well pleased, being tired and depressed.

He felt, without thinking it out, the difference between his two receptions.

Violet had filled the room with freshest flowers in his honor, and two pink shaded lamps threw a pretty light over the odds and ends of knick-knacks of all sorts she liked to have about her.

She herself had on a fluffy white chiffon dress, with a long blue sash and blue ribbons that matched her eyes, the whole replete with a certain dainty primness characteristic of her.

She had prepared everything for a welcome, and what pleasanter welcome could there have been for a man who felt he deserved one?

As for Frank, the two sides of his life were so



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utterly separate, that he felt at the moment as if the one he had left behind was a dream.

"You dear little thing! How sweet you look!" he said, catching her in his arms, and kissing her, more like a brother than a lover certainly, but still very affectionately.

"You ought to be in bed," he said; "how in the world did you induce Miss Magrath to let you sit up?"

"I am so much better," said Violet, "and I lay down most of the afternoon. Frank, I am glad, so glad, to see you. Is your tooth all right, poor dear, and aren't you hungry? There's chicken mayonnaise and anchovy eggs waiting for you; I chose those things, as I knew you liked them."

"You are a darling," said Frank; "and how have you been? No more chills?"

"I have been just nursing myself," said Violet; "Miss Magrath will tell you what an angel of obedience I've been. Come and have some supper, Fluffy. Did the dentist make your tooth *quite* right? I was so unhappy about you, poor boy, when I found you had gone, and thought of you, suffering all the time."

Frank did not want to talk about his tooth, and he answered slightly, finding everything else pleasant. It was pleasant to sit with Violet's joyous face opposite him, to hear about all she had done in his absence, to be shown the big lily they had watched so long, which had flowered at last and been gath-

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ered in his honor, and the embroidered mantel-border they had talked of for the dining-room, which Violet had chosen according to his ideas.

She interrupted herself a thousand times, remembering she must tell him this or show him that. It struck him afresh after their five days' separation how changed she was from the apathetic invalid she had been when he married her.

Presently she came of her own accord to sit on his knee, a thing she had never done before, and nestled contentedly into his arms.

"I must send you to bed, dear," he said, stroking her pretty hair.

"I just want to say one thing to you first," said Violet, fingering his watch-chain. "Frank, though we have been married nearly two months"—she paused, hesitating—"I don't believe you quite feel as if I was your wife," she said. She stopped, rubbing her cheek caressingly against his shoulder, and he asked what she meant in rather a startled voice.

"I mean," said Violet, "you look upon me as somebody to be nursed and petted and made much of, and saved everything disagreeable—don't you see?"

"And isn't that the right way to think of my sweet?"

"It isn't, Frank, now I am so well. I have been thinking since you went away—your not telling me about your toothache began my thinking. I

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want to be treated like a wife and not like a sort of pet——”

Frank began to laugh. “But that’s what you are,” he said; “a very nice sort of pet.”

Violet shook her head.

“I don’t want to be treated like a kitten or a canary,” she said; “I want to hear things that bother you as well as what is pleasant. You know, Frank, I don’t think husbands and wives ought to have any secrets from each other, do you?”

“That’s the theory, certainly,” said Frank after a pause.

“And I want you to promise to have no secrets from me,” said Violet softly.

“Secrets—what secrets do you imagine I have?”

“I don’t know,” said Violet; “but I want you to tell them to me. I’m not such a little girl as you think, Frank, *indeed* I am not,” she added earnestly.

“But you must go to bed now,” said Frank; “I can’t invent a solemn secret to tell you at this hour of the night.”

He got up, putting her gently off his knee, and feeling his words, in their forced lightness, rang false. But Violet said no more, and he hoped he had deceived her.

She only gave a little sigh, and kept her thoughts to herself.

“I shall make him understand some day,” she said to herself.

“Lady Francis is greatly better,” said Miss

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Magrath, when he saw her alone, after Violet had gone to bed; "I have given up sleeping in her room, as she prefers to be alone."

"I am glad she is so much better," said Frank, and felt it was an odd way for him to speak when he had said it.

Miss Magrath was a kindly soul, though she was unbeautiful, and she took the deepest interest in Frank and Violet, and was full of pleasure in her news.

"She sleeps alone now," she repeated, "and scarcely needs to be treated like a regular invalid. She sleeps in the big room at the head of the stairs; I have moved to the room next door."

And Frank thought she looked at him oddly.



Above all other praise must I,  
And love my pretie pigsneye;  
For none I finde so womanlie  
As my sweet swetyng.



## CHAPTER

### VI

“COME and lunch with me next polo day. My house-boat is by the canal gate,” said Mrs. Maude. She was a large, handsome, not very youthful lady, married to such a young and callow subaltern that she went by the name of the “Baby-snatcher.”

She had known Frank in Rahore, and he was one of the many men to whom she freely announced herself devoted.

She amused him, and talking to her was as good a way as another of spending a chucker, when he was not playing polo.

“I am afraid I can’t,” he said, looking at her as if she was all the world to him, as was his quite unconscious habit; “I am glad to say, my wife is so much stronger that she means to drive in with me on polo days.”

“There!” said Mrs. Maude, in frankest disappointment, “I have been watching for the married man to peep out. I knew it would even spoil you, Fluffy, and you’ve borne it better than most people.”

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"*Thank* you," said Frank; "after that I know I ought to say I'd come to lunch, and leave my wife to make her own way in, and so keep your good opinion of me. But you see——"

"I never knew a year with such a deadly dull set of men. I assure you," said Mrs. Maude plaintively, "I've been quite glad to have Major Berkeley to tea, and you know he can't talk for two minutes on any subject without bringing in his liver, which is really quite uninteresting to me. I had young Dobbyn in twice, but he sits with his mouth open, and I can see his tongue, and that I *cannot* stand."

"I could quite understand your wanting to have me, *without* these explanations," said Frank reproachfully.

"Won't your wife come to lunch, too? I dare say you think me rude not to have asked her at once, but our meals are a bit of a scramble, and I've been hesitating."

Frank had both heard of and experienced Mrs. Maude's hospitality before. Everybody knew, as people do know things in India, that she only gave her cook five rupees for charcoal, and that, on off days, her meek boy-husband got his meals as best he could.

"Thank you," he said; "I am afraid it would be too long a day. This is only the second time she has come in to polo."

"Is she here to-day? Do introduce me to her. I hear she is so pretty and charming, and all the men

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who have been out to your place come back smitten with envy of you. You must be a handsome couple, and I'm longing to see her."

Mrs. Maude did not mean to be impertinent; she was merely ill-bred, and Frank knew it.

What had struck him in her remark were the words, "Pretty and charming," she had applied to Violet.

He looked round suddenly. Violet was sitting some distance off, and he had left Captain Marston talking to her, very kindly, Frank had thought.

He saw now that two or three men had come up, while Captain Marston showed no inclination to yield his place. They were all talking to Violet, and seemed amused and interested.

Mrs. Maude's eyes had followed his.

"Is *that* your wife?" she said. "Why, Fluffy, I call her quite lovely!"

Frank stared steadily at Violet with opening eyes.

Pretty—lovely—was she pretty? Certainly the dull look had left her blue eyes, her cheeks were no longer pinched and drawn, nor her lips so dead-white; she had very pretty hair, and a quaint, side-long way of looking up which was attractive. Certainly, too, those men looked as if they liked talking to her.

"Well, if she can talk to that prunes, prisms Captain Marston, she can talk to anybody," said Mrs. Maude; "he looks as if he had spent the best

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years of his life teaching Sunday-school, and the worst of it is he's quite as proper as he looks."

"I trust you don't think so badly of me," said Frank.

"Oh, you—you are married," said Mrs. Maude with a sigh.

It struck Frank all at once that it would have been more amusing to talk to Violet than to talk to Mrs. Maude, and he wondered he had never thought so before.

When Violet looked up, and suddenly meeting his eyes, gave him a smile, full of confident love, he was annoyed with Mrs. Maude for catching the look, and saying: "Lucky man!" but at the same time felt an odd pride in it.

He had no choice but to introduce Mrs. Maude, who insisted upon it; but as soon as the last chucker was over, he came up to Violet and suggested an immediate return, feeling absurdly annoyed with Captain Marston, who came up just as the carriage was driving off, and asked if he might ride out to tea on Sunday.

"You needn't have been in such a hurry to say 'yes,' Vi," he said discontentedly; "don't you think we do very well by ourselves? I thought of taking you over to the Nasim Bagh."

"Why in the world didn't you say so, then?" said Violet; "never mind; we can put him off. That will be far nicer. But I thought you liked to have people."



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"We get on very well alone, though, don't we, darling?" he said, studying her curiously. It was very odd that he had never noticed before what a change had come to her, and how attractive the way her hair waved over her forehead was, and her half-shy smile.

"I don't very much like your friend, Mrs. Maude," she said; "and what business has she to call you Fluffy?"

"Oh, I don't know. A great many people do," said Frank indifferently.

"But I don't mean them to go on doing it," said Violet; "I called you 'Lord Francis' several times, to give her a hint, and I stiffened and froze every time she said 'Fluffy.'"

"I can't imagine my little girl stiffening and freezing," said Frank, laughing.

"Oh, I *can*," said Violet; "I draw down my mouth, and raise my eyebrows, and speak in a certain pernickety way that's very successful."

The carriage had the road to itself; Frank suddenly slid his arm around her, and drew her close, looking at her steadily.

"Do you know you are very pretty, Vi?" he said.

She looked at him and laughed, flushing a little.

"But you really are, little girl," he repeated.

"Have you only just found it out?" she said, and hid her laughing, blushing face on his shoulder, till he could see nothing but her curly hair.

And when evening descended from Heaven above,  
And the earth was all rest, and the air was all love,  
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,  
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep.

## CHAPTER

### VII

A WIDE balcony ran round the house, and all the rooms opened on it.

In a sudden burst of hot weather at the end of May, Frank used often to sit there and write his letter to Barbara, the last thing before going to bed.

It was delicious on moonlight nights, with the trees throwing grotesque shadows in the garden below, and glimpses of the lake, gleaming like silver. It was so still that he could hear the ripple of the paddles of some belated boat from far across the water. Everything else was asleep, and he had the world to himself, he and his thoughts of Barbara.

He sat there one evening about ten o'clock, a week after his return from Murree. It was a warm, cloudy night, with the moon stealing out in uncertain streaks of light, and the faintest breeze rustling the thick chenar leaves now and then.

Frank had brought out a round table, and a reading lamp, and a comfortable canvas chair; he had

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

begun by smoking, but stopped, afraid the smell of his cigarette would float in through Violet's open door.

He had heard from Barbara every day since his return, miserable letters, making him dread, instead of long for, post-time.

She was still ill, and intensely lonely and unhappy, and he was very sorry for her, but he did not know what to do to help her.

She had rejected at once his half-formed suggestion of trying to get a companion for her, and he had not been sorry, for the difficulties, in her anomalous position, would have been great. He had written to her regularly since their parting, and felt she ought to understand it was all he could do.

And poor Barbara did understand; she did make unsuccessful efforts to fight down the jealousy that was making her life unendurable.

There were days when her letters expressed complete confidence in Frank. She trusted him, he was to be as happy as he could, and to write just when and how he felt inclined.

But she could not remain at this high point of magnanimity, and other letters followed, full of reproaches at the supposed coldness of what he had written, or because he had not mentioned Violet, or had said too much about her. Though a letter of this kind was sure to be followed by one of apology, it did harm all the same.

Frank had had six letters since his return, and

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

they had contradicted and apologized for each other in a bewildering fashion that tried his patience.

He sat with the last one spread out on the table beside him, undecided whether to answer or ignore its burst of reproach.

"My own darling," he began, "I am as miserable as you are——"

Then he stopped, feeling for the first time a doubt of the truth of his words.

*Was* he miserable? Had he been miserable all that afternoon, while he and Violet had floated idly about the lake, and gone to tea with some people they knew at the Nasim Bagh? Or the day before, when they had driven in to polo together, and Violet had put on a new white dress with pink ribbons, and had run upstairs to change the ribbons for blue ones, because he had said blue suited her best?

She had absolutely *run* upstairs, though she had been so much out of breath when she got to the top that he had followed to scold her.

She was such a quaint, dainty little girl, and she looked so soft and childish; it was odd to see how very decidedly, now that she was better, she was escaping from Miss Magrath's trammels and taking her place as mistress of the house.

She had begun to play at housekeeping very solemnly, and believed herself to be learning Hindostanee, and she had daily a new device to improve the arrangement of the drawing-room, and was absolutely happy over it all.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Frank kept on finding out new and surprising things about her, and he was growing quite sure she was pretty.

Captain Marston certainly thought so, and several other people, and she had been most amusing on Sunday, when Mrs. Maude had taken upon herself to ride out uninvited to tea.

Violet had been gracious at first while her guest was talking about her loneliness, with poor "little M.," as she called her husband, down in the plains, waiting for second leave. But when Mrs. Maude grew more familiar and at her ease, it had been very funny to see Violet ruffle her feathers, like a belligerent chicken.

Frank laughed to himself as he remembered how Mrs. Maude had said, with cheerful confidence: "I hope you don't think it very familiar of me to call your husband 'Fluffy'?" And Violet had pursed up her little face and answered: "Since you ask me, Mrs. Maude, I am afraid I *do*."

It amused him to remember how taken aback that self-possessed lady had been. He was smiling to himself as he thought of it, when the clock in the hall began to strike eleven, and reminded him that his letter had not progressed.

He tore up the line he had written, and started afresh.

"My darling Barbara,

"I wish you were not so unhappy, and I am longing to hear you are better. These separations

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

are very hard to bear. When I ride in for the post——”

There was very little ink left in the ink-bottle. Frank, dipping in his pen impatiently, began to wonder what Violet thought of his eagerness for the post. That she had noticed it he knew, and he was beginning to realize that she was an element in the tangle to be considered, and not merely to be acted for.

What did she think of it all, and did she realize that this marriage of theirs was different from the marriage of other people?

He could see her door as he sat there, and found himself wondering if she was fast asleep, or perhaps lying awake, thinking of him.

She was so near ; their position to each other was so strange ; he often wondered how much she understood of its strangeness.

Barbara understood. Barbara knew, Fluffy thought to himself, that though he loved her and her only (and he did, he was sure of it), still—now that Violet was better——

Barbara had never made a more bitter mistake than when she had let Frank see that she did not fully trust him ; with his nature, knowing this had meant a disastrous loss of faith in himself.

And Violet was so pretty and sweet and loving, and they were together all day long, and together as lovers.

The lamp had been flickering uncertainly, and

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

suddenly went out. He would have to leave his letter to Barbara till the morning, or get another lamp.

It was delicious here in the moonlight, and it seemed a pity to go in.

He got up and leaned over the veranda, with the lights and shadows and sweet scents of the garden beneath him, and he longed for Barbara passionately, longed to hold her in his arms, to kiss her——

A nightingale began to sing in the garden below, and he remembered he and Violet had waited several evenings in vain to hear one, and he had promised to call her if he did.

Why not call her now, if she was awake? He had only to step to her open door and say "Violet" softly, and she would come to him, her pretty, ruffled hair tumbling over her shoulders, her blue eyes shining with joy at being with him.

He hesitated; the temptation to have somebody—to have Violet—to share this glorious night, and drive out the craving for Barbara, was strong, and there was no reason, he told himself, why he should not have Violet.

But he would not do it. He clasped the veranda ledge with both hands, as if he feared he could not keep himself still, unaided, and with an instinct that it was best that he should be alone.

He started violently when a voice at his side said his name softly.

Violet was standing in her doorway, with the moonlight on her face. Her curly hair fell in masses

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

over her white linen wrapper, and the daintiest blue shoes matched its ribbons.

She stood, with a certain shy hesitation in her manner, and she looked wonderfully and unexpectedly pretty.

"Frank," she said, "I heard you moving about, and as I couldn't go to sleep, I thought I might come and talk to you. It is such a lovely night."

Frank looked at her in silence, making no movement toward her.

"May I come?" she said.

"The nightingales are singing," said Frank hoarsely.

Violet came across to him at his words.

"And you promised to tell me," she said.

"Hush!" said Frank; "listen!"

They stood silently, side by side, Violet looking into the garden below, Frank looking at Violet.

The nightingale sang on; his mate was listening, and that was what mattered to him, not the presence of one or two unimportant human beings. When he ceased, in a long-drawn trill, quivering with love and happiness, the two on the veranda moved nearer to each other by a common impulse, and his breath touched her cheek.

"I am so glad I have heard it," she said, drawing a long sigh of content, and then her eyes met Frank's eyes and fell before them, and with a sudden movement he took her into his arms, and drew her soft warm body close.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"I can't let you stay here—it is madness," he said with a shaking voice.

"I shan't catch cold on a night like this," said Violet, but she suddenly began to tremble, and he could feel her heart beating in quick, frightened throbs against his.

"*Darling!*" he said, and caught her up in his arms, and carried her out of the moonlight into the darkness of her room.

The breeze was growing stronger. It blew the French window close behind them, and whirled about the papers on the writing-table, seizing Barbara's unfinished letter and fluttering it here and there about the balcony; it rustled up and down the stone railing, and blew back uncertainly against the closed door; presently a rougher puff of wind came, and took it and floated it away into the night.



What is love? 'tis not hereafter :  
Present mirth hath present laughter :

What's to come is still unsure,  
In delay there lies no plenty.  
Then come and kiss me, sweet-and-twenty,  
Youth's a stuff will not endure !



## CHAPTER VIII

FRANK had been quite busily employed for about ten minutes in fastening lilies in Violet's hat and hair and dress, in spite of faintest remonstrances from her. She felt sorry that so many should be gathered to die, but if Frank wished it, if he deigned so to amuse himself, he must not be denied. So she lay, curled up on the rug he had spread over the grass for her, and let him have his will. At the other end of the garden a small native boy was keeping the birds off the cherries with a huge wooden clapper, and the polo ponies, led out for a walk by their syces, shied and bucked, more with exuberant spirits than with fright, as they passed him.

"You haven't been in to polo for days," said Violet.

"There wasn't any," said Frank lazily, "not after the rain on Wednesday, and probably not to-day."

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"I am sure there was to-day," replied Violet, "and fancy your being too lazy to ask."

"Too happy, you mean," Frank said.

"Considering we have been married two months ——" began Violet.

"Two months?—we have been married exactly six days," said Frank, and as there was nobody looking he kissed her.

It was what Violet called "a happy day"—a day when she declared that trees and plants and flowers looked as if they were enjoying themselves, and the water of the lake rippled with quite a different and festive sound. She was deeply convinced that trees, as well as human beings, had their days for being happy and dispirited.

"Don't you know," she said, "that there are days when one feels wretched without knowing why? People say it is the weather, but I know it is not. It is only that all the trees and flowers are in low spirits, and we can't help feeling it."

"They must have depressing moments at times," said Frank, "especially the vegetables, when they are getting big enough to be eaten."

But Violet was quite serious. Frank, sitting at her feet, feeling her adoration for him in every word and act, and returning it with what, if not love, was at least a very similar feeling, was uncertainly happy. He did not love Violet, he was sure of it. It was impossible, he told himself, that he could have changed, and changed so soon.

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He loved Barbara, but he had been thrown with Violet in circumstances which had been unbearable, and would have been unbearable to any man who *was* a man and not a stone.

Further than this he did not trouble himself to analyze his feelings. It was too late now; there was nothing to be done but to make the most of the present, as long as it lasted, and put away all thought of the future. Barbara must never know; he had thought at first that he could tell her, and keep the truth between them, but now he knew he never could. Happen what might, between them there must always be one sealed thing.

But the knowledge of this stilted his letters, making them an effort, and he had twice in this last week missed a day, with following letters of excuse, and many times sat struggling for words to say.

Barbara's letters he had now arranged should be brought to him separately, and he sometimes carried them in his pocket for hours, hating to open them. But for them he could have dreamed through this idyll happily.

They had kept it all to themselves, for there seemed a great difficulty about doing anything else, and so it seemed more idyllic.

Frank would come softly along the veranda in the starlight, and on very warm nights they would sometimes sit there for a time, and talk in whispers, lest Miss Magrath should hear them.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Or they would creep into Violet's room, not daring to have a light, lest it should shine through the chinks of the wooden partition to Miss Magrath, and she should come in to see if Violet was ill.

And always Frank went back in the dewy morning light, before seven o'clock, because that was the time the ayah brought Violet's chota-hazri. He would not have minded the ayah, but Violet could not be persuaded to indifference.

The romance, the strange, unnecessary secrecy, appealed to them both.

No wonder even polo seemed indifferent in these happy days, which Frank knew must be so short, and it was enough to lie under the trees or float over the lake and be adored by Violet.

"You are just like your name in that dress, sweet," he said; "it's heliotrope, isn't it, and, do you know, your eyes seem to have caught the color to-day to match it."

"Well, I never heard of anybody with heliotrope eyes before," said Violet.

"Don't you know nothing about you is like anybody else?" said Frank, looking at her; "yours are the sweetest eyes——"

A soft-footed khitmaghar had come to them across the grass, and they started guiltily apart.

"The post," said Violet; "don't you want it?"

"I want nothing but you," said Frank, and he was not sure whether he meant it or not.

"There's a letter from mother," said Violet, and

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as she read it her face fell. Frank, who was watching her, saw it at once.

"What is wrong?" he said; "no bad news, Vi, is there?"

She turned to him, coloring, and forcing a vexed laugh.

"Bad news?" she said; "no; but—mother is coming here."

And a long, dismayed pause fell between them.

Frank broke it first; he drew himself up to a sitting position, and laughed.

"You undutiful daughter," he said.

"I knew it was too perfect to last," said Violet, with trembling lips.

"You look exactly like Baby when she has made up her mind to be naughty," said Frank; "I see a distinct family resemblance for the first time. Darling, are you going to *roar*?"

Violet laughed, as he had meant her to, and blushed, turning away that he should not see her dewy blue eyes.

"Of course," she said, "I shall be glad to see mother——"

"Obviously," said Frank.

"But—but we have been so happy. It seems like the ending of one bit of our lives."

"On the contrary," said Frank, "it only means that we shall have a companion for Miss Magrath."

But Violet shook her head; she knew better.

Lady Cooke had not even hinted at her plans be-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

fore, though they had been formed from the first. She now wrote she meant to take advantage of the rains next month, and come to Srinagar for the rest of the hot weather, and she was bringing the children, as she could not leave them, and did not consider Simla a good place for them.

About the struggle between herself and Sir John before this victory was won she said nothing, and she scarcely mentioned Christian Science. But Frank and Violet read between the lines.

"You mustn't become a Christian Scientist, dear," said Frank.

"There's no fear now," said Violet, shaking her head, "but I am afraid she will try. Well," with an effort, "it will be nice to have Baby, and see how she loves it all. How she will revel in the donkeys! Frank, I feel horrid not to be gladder, but I am so happy with you."

He looked at her very gravely. It was something, at least, that this thing he had done had made one person completely happy.

"These two months have been as good as you expected?" he said, knowing her answer before she radiantly gave it.

"Look here, Vi," he said, "do you think two months like this would be worth paying for? If you had your choice and knew each bit of happiness we have had was to be paid for by bitter sorrow, would you have taken the happiness or done without both?"

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It was not like Frank to indulge in these abstract speculations.

Violet, a little surprised, only said: "You know," in a low voice.

"But tell me, all the same," he said. He was leaning on his elbow on the grass very close to her, and she began to rub her fingers up and down the sleeve of his coat.

"Do you remember the little mermaid in Hans Andersen's story?" she said, "and what she gave up for the prince, who did not even love her? Whatever may happen to me now I can have no reason to grumble at my life."

"You are sure you mean it?" said Frank, with a certain eagerness in his manner.

"I am sure two months' happiness like this is worth *years* of suffering," said Violet; "one can always feel one has touched the very best of life, and there must be so many poor people who miss it."

Frank drew a long breath.

"And, after all," said Violet softly, "if trouble comes to us now it will not seem so hard, for we shall be together to bear it."

But Frank turned his face away at her words, for he knew that if trouble came it would not be a trouble they could bear together.





Le moment passé n'est plus rien ;  
L'avenir peut ne jamais être :  
Le présent est l'unique bien  
Dont l'homme soit vraiment le maître.



## CHAPTER

### IX

**A**LMOST three full weeks remained to Violet and Frank before Lady Cooke's arrival, and they made the most of every hour, eagerly determined to enjoy it. They had grown into an irrational conviction that her arrival would mean an end of their happiness. All the same, their preparations gave them a certain pleasure, and Violet took satisfaction out of the prospect of being hostess to her mother and showing how well and strong she had grown.

Miss Magrath's room was prepared for Lady Cooke, and Miss Magrath was relegated downstairs, and two big, delightful attics were dedicated, one to Baby and her nurse, and the other to Russell. They would have to make a different arrangement if the whole party stayed down at Srinagar, as the attics would soon become unpleasantly hot, but hopes were entertained that Lady Cooke would go up to Gulmarg for a couple of months with the rest of Srinagar, while the doctor had said it would be best for Violet to remain where she was.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

That Violet should not be disturbed and worried by her mother Frank had made up his mind. It was the one comfort in the whole sorry business, that she was so happy; and happy she should remain if he could manage it.

But Frank himself, not being heartless, nor even much more selfish than most people, found it impossible to be happy. He could not forget Barbara, and the misery of her dreary life. She had neither friends, nor interests, nor occupations, and the days which passed so quickly to him and Violet dragged in endless sameness to her. How long she would endure, he could not feel sure, nor how long she would go on hoping.

Had she known it, there was little to be gained by waiting longer. Two or three years of life, at least, probably lay before Violet, though she might never be able to live that life quite like other people. Barbara did not realize it yet. Frank tried to hide it from her, and she remembered keenly what the doctor had said, and how she herself had seen Violet, white and ghostly, in her weakness. Certainly Frank did his best to introduce no fresh picture of her, and carefully refrained from telling her when Violet drove into polo, or went out boating with him.

Of course, had Barbara not been a suspect and an outcast in Murree, she must soon have learnt the truth from some outsider, but no lady ever spoke to her, and she was too completely engrossed in Frank, and too thoroughly under the influence of home

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memories of a woman's duty in keeping herself respectable, to encourage men.

Barbara was very whole hearted in what she did. Just now she had no thought beyond her husband, but if a day came when he utterly failed her, it might be that other restraints would fail her too. At present they were all sufficient, in spite of her great loneliness. She had never even formulated to herself the thought that it might have been best for her had Frank stood aside and not interfered with her life.

To him, the remembrance of her was a daily and most bitter reproach, not to be driven away even by the thought that what had been done had been done by Barbara herself, of her own free will, and with her eyes open to the risk.

There must be a day ahead when it would come to a struggle between him and her, and he could not hope that it would end any other way than in exposing him as a scoundrel before all men. Bigamy had an ugly sound, and spelt ruin.

It seemed beyond belief to him now that they could ever have dreamed of such a mad thing; it seemed to him now, it would have been so simple to declare their marriage and face the consequences.

But they had not done so, and it was obvious that at present there was nothing to be done but to live from hour to hour, with no future; he could do absolutely nothing to avert, or even postpone, the catastrophe.

Lady Cooke and her family duly arrived on the

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10th of July, somewhat the worse for a very trying journey.

She, herself, looked worn and haggard, but as it was against her principles to give way to, or even admit, physical fatigue, she pronounced herself quite well.

Russell was almost speechless with heat and exhaustion, and had to be put to bed at once, and the governess was quite prostrate.

Baby, alone, was only a little pale and very cross.

She caused considerable general discomfort by exclaiming: "What! no baby *yet?*" in a tone of intense disgust, on discovering the fallacy of some unspoken expectations of hers. Her small brain connected matrimony and infants firmly, and she felt herself ill-used.

Violet showed her newly gained health proudly, finding unnecessary things to do, and quite unconsciously exaggerating the things she had done.

After dinner, when she and her mother were together in the drawing-room, and Frank, on the veranda outside, with a cigarette, leaned through the window every now and then to talk to them, she asked her mother triumphantly if she saw the immense change in her since they had parted at Rahore.

Lady Cooke's pale face brightened.

"Indeed I do," she said, with a smile; "but I am not surprised. Violet, you can no longer have any

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doubts of the truth of Christian Science ; even Frank must be convinced."

They looked at her blankly.

"But," said Violet, "*why?* What do you mean, mother?"

Lady Cooke sat upright on the hard chair she had chosen for herself, and looked at her daughter with shining eyes.

"I am indeed nothing and have no power," she said, "but through me God has worked this cure. I have never been successful in a more striking manner than with you, Violet."

Frank and Violet exchanged a hurried glance.

"But, mother," said Violet, "you haven't even seen me——"

"You know well that absence and presence are nothing, God is everywhere. Doctors had given you up, human science had acknowledged itself defeated; but God and I were not defeated." Lady Cooke meant no irreverence, and spoke very earnestly.

Frank and Violet had nothing to say. Lady Cooke, overstrained and worn out after her journey, was worked up by her subject into fervent excitement, which entirely drove away her usual cold languor.

"You can no longer resist this proof," she said, "and before you both the greatest possibilities lie. Yours is an ideal marriage; a marriage such as the world may some day grow capable of understand-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

ing; such a marriage as it is the aim and object of Christian Science to prepare the world for; a union of souls, free from all things base and earthly and unreal."

Violet's head was bent down over the work she had taken up; Frank, outside the window, was in shadow.

"It is for you," Lady Cooke said, "to find for yourselves a place as pioneers of the mystic, ethereal union of man and woman, where Soul meets Soul, and all things gross and material are trampled under foot. The Truth must reach you now, and your position is a proud and almost unique one. Frank, do not even you find it so?"

"Oh, yes, it's uncommonly unique," said Frank.



Science reveals the necessity of sufficient suffering either before or after death to quench the love of sin. —*Health Science.*



## CHAPTER

### X

FRANK and Violet sat under the trees next morning while he smoked his after-breakfast pipe.

"Mother is just coming out," Violet said. "I wish she wouldn't insist on going on just as if she had had no journey yesterday. She looks so utterly worn out."

"But you can't expect a Christian Scientist, who is above all human laws, to be tired," said Frank; "her body is unreal, you know, and her soul presumably doesn't get hot, or feel jolted in the tonga."

"Don't, Frank," said Violet, "don't make fun of her."

"I won't, if you'll promise not to turn Christian Scientist yourself, now she has proved she has cured you—or, at any rate, there's no way of proving she hasn't. It's rather like witchcraft, when revengeful people used to stick pins in little wax figures, to make their enemies waste away."

"It's what they call the 'Absent Treatment,'" said Violet; "she sits in her room and thinks of me

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

for a time every day, and every now and then sends me a text or two out of 'Health and Science.' But, of course, I didn't have the full force of the treatment, as I wasn't doing my share."

"You'll be put into their papers as a brilliant cure," said Frank; "it's only to be hoped they won't set us up as an example of mystical marriage and the union of souls. Sweet, turn your little pink face this way—you must apply to Christian Science for some permanent color—it's so becoming. Here they come—Baby at full speed for a wonder."

"Russell looks very ill, and how he has grown," said Violet, "while Baby has run to width. Here, Babs, come and tell me how you like Kashmir, and if you are happy."

Baby was breathless and excited beyond measure. She had so many things to say, that words and sentences tumbled helplessly over each other.

The donkeys had eaten bread out of her hand, and she was to ride them; she and Russell were to go out in the boat with their governess in the afternoon; she had gone to help the boy under the trees to make a noise (meaning the boy employed to scare birds from the fruit trees); last, but not least, she had seed a big rat and it had runned right across the path in front of her.

She was incoherent and somewhat incomprehensible in her excitement, and Russell, following, pale and listless, by his mother's side, made rather a sad contrast.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

He did not care about anything, not even when Frank brought a leaf of ripe yellow apricots, and Baby burst into a scream of delight at the sight of them.

But under the influence of the sunshine and the flowers even Lady Cooke seemed to forget higher things, and rejoice like anybody else in the peace of her surroundings.

It was so completely restful, and hot enough to be conscientiously lazy; all the trees in the garden had given their help to make the light breeze sweet, and all the sounds that reached them were what Violet called "Dreamy sounds"—the buzzing of bees, the chirping of grasshoppers, the thud of an unripe apricot on the grass.

The lake made a cool blue background, and it was near enough for the soft lap-lap of its waters against the moored boats to reach them. A green lizard darted across the gravel path beside them, and fled at Baby's scream of delight.

"It will end in Baby being sent away in disgrace if you excite her so," said Lady Cooke, but quite mildly; and Frank said: "Oh, no; nobody is ever in disgrace a day like this," and went on tickling Baby with a long blade of grass, while she lay on her back with fat shrieks of laughter.

But a few minutes later a little incident happened which altogether upset Frank's growing hope that Lady Cooke would not be as displeasing a mother-in-law as he had expected.

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The plate of apricots had attracted two or three yellow Indian wasps, and as she wriggled under the infliction of the blade of grass, Baby's little curly head approached unduly near that end of the rug.

Whether they mistook her golden curls for apricots, or were merely annoyed at threatened interference with their feast, the result was equally disastrous to poor Baby.

Her laughter turned in a moment to wailing, before anybody knew what was the matter, and she sat up, and promptly slapped Frank's face with all her strength, subsiding into bitter sobs and laments.

It was a minute or two before anybody could make out what was wrong, and she was very nearly being borne away in disgrace by the astonished Frank, before her shrieks of: "I am not naughty! I am not naughty! I am *good*! It is Fluffy who is naughty!" resolved themselves into an explanation that Fluffy had stuck a pin into her head, and it hurt so.

On this statement an examination disclosed a wasp, still struggling feebly among the curls, and she became the object of much sympathy.

Frank suggested tobacco, and Violet blue-bag; and as the former was more immediately obtainable, he was about to apply it, while Violet divided the thick curls, when Lady Cooke interfered.

"Please don't, Frank," she said; "let her bear the pain; it will do her no harm."

Frank turned and stared at her, and Violet said:

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"But, mother, it is to do her good, poor little thing; it will make the pain less."

"But I don't wish the pain to be made less," said Lady Cooke quietly. "A little pain is good for a child. It is part of the discipline of life."

"Oh, Lord!" said Frank, and Baby's sobs broke an awkward silence.

Violet, after a few minutes, took her away, and Lady Cooke followed, presumably to see that her orders were obeyed.

Frank was left alone with Russell, who had a book on his knee, and was reading it listlessly. Presently he gave a very long sigh, a sigh so heart-felt and unchildlike that it drew Frank from his vexed thoughts.

"What's wrong, old man?" he said.

"I wish life wasn't such a perplexity for children," said Russell. He sat up, such an unboylike boy, with his precise manner, and the face of some strange young-old man.

"I wouldn't bother about it," said Frank.

"I wish I was grown up," said Russell, "and could understand everything. But all grown-up people are not good," he ended, shaking his head; "when I was little, like Baby, I used to think they were."

"And they don't all understand everything, either," said Frank; "but where's your Christian Science, Russell? Doesn't it explain everything?"

Russell hesitated and looked searchingly at Frank.

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Then he drew a little nearer and lowered his voice almost to a whisper. "Fluffy, if I tell you, it's a secret. I don't believe Christian Science is a true thing."

"Hullo, this is a new development," said Frank. "What is the meaning of this?"

"It's since Miss Ross came, partly, and partly another thing," said Russell, in a dismayed voice; "you know Paddy, my little dog? Mother said if one believed enough, a miracle could be done, and when he got ill, I believed and believed, and sat and believed nothing else for hours but that he would get well. *And he died.*"

Russell sat staring at Frank with wide-open, solemn eyes, and he was so intensely serious that Frank could not but be serious, too.

"But your mother doesn't know this, Russell, does she?" he said.

"Nobody but Miss Ross knows," said Russell; "it is a secret. You must promise not to tell; mother would be so angry."

"But that's a bit mean, you know, Russell—not playing the game."

"What's playing the game?"

"Not above board I mean—honest—frank."

Russell gave a troubled sigh. "Ah," he said, "it's easy for grown-up people to be honest."

Frank felt himself flushing.

"But children must be a little cunning if they want any peace." And he added, after a pause:

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"And then I am not quite sure. That is the worst of it. And if I believe the wrong thing, my soul will be lost. It's very puzzling for a child."

"I don't believe you *are* a child," said Frank; "you look about a hundred years old. Leave your soul to take care of itself, Russell, and I will take you for a ride; you shall ride Gunner, and we'll go now, before it gets too hot."

Not even Russell was proof against such a prospect as that of riding one of Frank's polo ponies, and he grew quite cheerful under its influence.

But when Frank and Violet were alone that afternoon they exchanged some dissatisfied confidences.

Lady Cooke could not avoid the subject of Christian Science. She had urged it upon Violet again and again that day with a persistence which was distressing. It was natural enough, in her conviction that her daughter's moral and physical cure lay in believing, that she should feel the greatest efforts must be made; but Violet was not strong or well enough to bear the constant pressure, and looked troubled.

"I don't know whether I did wrong," she said, "but when I got Baby to myself, and the poor little thing was in such pain, I felt I must do something for her, and I put on blue-bag and told her not to tell mother. But I don't want to make her deceitful."

"Russell is the worst," said Frank; "he is in dire distress, between Miss Ross's blood-and-thunder and very out-of-date religion and his mother's Christian

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Science. I don't know what that boy will become if he doesn't stop worrying about his soul."

"Yes; Miss Ross tells me he sometimes sobs and cries for hours after he has gone to bed, for fear he isn't saved, and she thinks it is so sweet and touching. She ought to be sent away, at any rate," said Violet. "Oh, dear, Frank; it is so hard to be able to do nothing to help people! We were selfish to be so happy and forget all about it."

"Whatever you do, Violet," said Frank, "don't begin worrying about your sins. I'll get the syces to field and teach Russell cricket, and do my best to make him forget his important little soul; but, selfish or not, I don't mean to be unhappy about other people's troubles, if I can help it."



Ich komme, Ich weiss nicht woher ;  
Ich gehe, Ich weiss nicht wohin ;  
Ich bin, Ich weiss nicht was ;  
Mich wundert dass Ich so frohlich bin.



## CHAPTER

### XI

LADY COOKE and the children stayed down at Srinagar all August, and she made no suggestion of moving into another house, though when Russell and Baby were brought downstairs into cooler rooms, the household was decidedly cramped. People asked her if she was not afraid of the heat for the children, and she liked the question, as it gave her an opening to explain why she did not fear it, and how essential her presence was to her elder daughter.

Violet, ungratefully, did not consider it essential at all. She was very young, and very happy with Frank, and the happiness had brought a little selfishness with it. She was a good little girl, but by no means perfect, and, like most Indian children, she had lived so much of her life without her mother that she had no habit of companionship with her. Besides, Lady Cooke was trying, distinctly trying ; she had no interest in anything but Christian Science, and did not wish her daughter to have an interest in anything else either.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

When Violet was feeling particularly bright and well, it did not matter so much, but on her bad days her mother worried her intensely. Lady Cooke, one-ideaed though she was, had a suspicion of this, and it hurt her, though she would have thought it wrong to abandon her efforts. She was striving for Violet's good, and Violet was the nearest to her of her children, and would have been surprised to know how great her mother's love for her was.

But Violet was too young to see anything but the tiresome side of it, which was in itself pathetic.

She seemed to be getting better every day, and was probably as little of an invalid now as she was ever likely to be. The heat did her good, and days that other people found trying and oppressive were pleasant and reviving to her.

It was quite a holiday to her and to Frank when Lady Cooke went over to spend the day with a Christian Science friend at the Nasim Bagh, which happened about once a week. Almost everybody had gone up to Gulmarg, and there was no polo for Frank, and he was surprised to find how happy he could be without it. It was very hot, but by no means unbearably so, and the evenings were pleasant. Occasionally one or two of the stray people left behind came out to tea or dinner.

Mrs. Maude, her little M. having promptly gone down with typhoid on his arrival, was nursing him in the hot little hospital on the Srinagar road, and even more sorry for herself than for him. She came



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

out often, being very dull, and frankly miserable in her destitution of male society, and toward the end of August she was completely converted to Christian Science, and Lady Cooke's very humble pupil.

Frank ill-naturedly put the conversion down to hopes of an invitation to Government House, till he found she was endeavoring to persuade little M. to abandon milk and soda for beefsteaks. She was quite unhappy when he declined to be converted, and stuck to the doctor's peptonized milk.

Frank spent most of the day with Violet, but he went in to the hospital now and then to see little M., or to the Library, to read the papers and bring out some books. He often spent an hour or two trying to make Russell into a boy, as he said, but the heat, which made even Baby cross and languid, seemed to have taken every spark of energy out of Russell.

Day followed day with much sameness. There were pears to eat now instead of apricots, and the big lilies floating on the lake were coming into flower, but these were the only things that changed.

Frank felt that his life had come to a pause. He had got used to its doubleness, and his conscience no longer sprang to arms at some stray word or look. He had even got used to the uncertainty of it all, as people get used to any uncertainty if it only lasts long enough. No climax had come; he exchanged letters with Barbara, which were still sometimes loving and sometimes cold. They had grown shorter

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

and more infrequent, that was all, and he thought of her less often.

Frank had changed since the day when he had made the first real effort in his life to deny himself, and had failed, but he had not changed enough to make him willing to face painful things, and the thought of poor Barbara, eating her heart out in Murree, was intensely painful.



It has been said by them of old times, and our fathers have told us, that the kiss of first love, the first kiss of the first woman we love, is beyond all kisses sweet. But true it is also that no less sweet is the first kiss of the last woman we love.

—LE GALLIENNE.



## CHAPTER

### XII

“FRANK,” said Violet, “I have something to tell you.”

It was a moonlight night, brighter even than the moonlight night, three months ago, when she had first come out to him on the veranda.

But there were no nightingales singing; they had given up love-making long ago, and their families were grown up, and on the world. The apple-blossom which had made the air sweet then had turned to ripening apples or fallen from the tree and died. It was the last day of August, and the summer was over—an appropriate day to end forever Frank’s life of thoughtlessness.

But he had no presentiment of what was coming, as he and Violet stood and leaned over the veranda ledge together, with the night to themselves and everybody else asleep.

“Something to tell me, Vi?” he said softly, for

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Lady Cooke's door at the other end of the veranda was open; "what is it? Has your mother been worrying you?"

"No," said Violet; "it's something that really matters. Frank, if I asked you what you wished for most in life, what would you say?"

"Why, darling, you are trembling!" said Frank in great surprise; "what is the matter?"

"Perhaps your wish wouldn't be the same as mine"—what would have been his wish, indeed?—"but, Frank, I have been so wanting to tell you," said Violet, clinging to him, "but I waited till I was quite sure."

She stopped, and a first dawning presentiment came with a shock to Frank's mind. But he said nothing, and Violet, gaining courage when the first words were spoken, crept into his arms and told him.

It was well she kept her face hidden. In the first moments, horror and despair were too clearly written on his.

Somehow, he had never thought of this, or if the possibility had vaguely crossed his mind, he had driven it away at once. The shock brought sudden, unwise words to his lips.

"It's impossible, Vi, you must be mistaken! It can't be true!" he said.

Violet drew away from him with an instinctive movement as he spoke. He had failed her for the first time, but failed her at one of the crises which

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

make or mar married life. She knew, without stopping to realize, that it was a failure she could forgive, but never forget.

"I am not mistaken," she said almost coldly, because she was so bitterly hurt. She had thought and dreamed so much of the night when she should tell him, and of how he would gather her into his arms, perhaps with tenderer words than he had spoken yet. And he was not glad, he was startled and disappointed.

It was the first time she had ever drawn away from him, and it startled him, even through his whirling, dismayed thoughts.

Poor little Violet! It was his fault, not hers, that the thought that a child was coming to be his and hers could only bring trouble.

She looked so sweet, standing there in the moonlight in her white wrapper, with her pretty hair streaming over her shoulders, tossed and ruffled where her head had lain on his breast.

A moment before she had been so happy and proud and shy, all at once—what a brute he had been to hurt her! But would not this news bring the end of everything? When Barbara knew the truth of his relations with Violet, could he ever ask her to consent to their continuance?

She would not understand that for a man the position had been impossible, though he did not love Violet.

Though he did not love her.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Once the truth was known he could never see her again—never—it would be all over.

A great stab of pain darted through Frank's heart, a pain so physical and acute, it made him giddy for a moment.

Never to see Violet again—she who just now was so wholly his—he could not bear it! And at last he realized that he loved her with all his heart.

In the first moment the knowledge drove everything else out of his head, and he forgot that it could mean nothing but sorrow and shame.

He caught her in his arms, overcoming her slight motion of withdrawal.

"My sweetheart, my dearest, how I love you!" he said in a shaken whisper.

And with the first true lover's kisses she had ever known on her lips, Violet's first disappointment was driven away, and for the time forgotten.

"Then you are *not* sorry?" she said.

"My sweet, my own darling—it has shown me how much I love you," he said passionately. "God forgive me!" he ended under his breath.

But next morning, when Frank had crept back to his room, and found himself alone in the early daylight to face this thing that had happened to him, without Violet's clinging arms to confuse his thoughts, the full and bitter comprehension of it all came to him.

He had spoilt three lives; he had been true to nobody. He had simply shut his eyes, and gone

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

through life as best pleased him, and now nothing he could do could avert the consequences of what he had done, and he could not suffer alone.

Frank walked up and down the room, with hasty, uncertain steps, careful, through all the confusion of his thoughts, to step lightly, lest Violet should hear him and wonder.

His servant came to his door with his chota-haziri, surprised to find him up, and asked when he wanted his bath; but he was dismissed impatiently.

Frank wanted to think, to face the thing he had brought upon himself and others, and make up his mind what to do.

He had been selfish all through—utterly selfish. He had told himself it was for Barbara's sake that he had consented to do what he had done, but he saw clearly enough now it had been for his own.

It had been for his own sake, at least as much as for Barbara's, that he had felt the want of money; it had been for his own sake he had feared general condemnation, and the reproach of Violet's misery, if he disclosed his marriage.

Since then, he had flattered himself that he was true to Barbara and kind to Violet, till now he knew he was not true, and his kindness to Violet had merely been love for her, growing every day and week, unrealized by him simply because he was determined not to realize it.

He had not believed it possible he could change;

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

but now his passionate love for Barbara seemed nothing but a past infatuation beside what he felt for Violet, which filled his whole soul with shame and joy and misery.

Certainly Barbara had cut a link between them that day at Murree when she had told him what she had done; but was it for him to blame her? Poor Barbara! He had indeed, in meddling with her life, spoilt it.

He had spoilt Violet's too, and her child's—its life was spoilt before it had begun. Nameless with the curse of ill-health almost assuredly upon it, it would be indeed a child better unborn. It was pathetic to think that Violet was so ignorantly happy in the prospect of its coming.

Suddenly Frank, in the midst of his miserable thoughts, laughed out to himself.

How were they to tell Lady Cooke? Lady Cooke, who had spread the news of this soul-union proudly, and spoken of them as pioneers of mystical marriage, with eyes resolutely shut to any other possibility. Would she accept the coming child as the offspring of soul-union?

Unhappy as he was, the fancy made him laugh, though he flushed angrily when he thought of the amusement the news would give to all who had listened to her.

But these things were trifles; everything was a trifle except what concerned Violet.

Frank raged at his own impotence to help her. Not



## **The Dishonor of Frank Scott**

the repentance of a lifetime, not the sacrifice of all he held dear in the world, could avail to save her from suffering for this wrong-doing.

The thing was done, and nothing could undo it.



Since we parted yester eve,  
I do love thee, love, believe,  
Twelve times dearer, twelve hours longer,  
One dream deeper, one night stronger,  
One sun surer—this much more  
Than I loved thee, love, before.

—OWEN MEREDITH.



## CHAPTER XIII

“YOU shan’t! you shan’t!” screamed Baby, in an agony; “I *won’t* let you!”

“I shall if I choose,” said Russell; “oh, Baby—you are hurting! you *wicked* little girl!”

Frank, on his way down to breakfast, was drawn by the shrill agony of Russell’s voice to interfere, though he was in no mood for the children.

Baby was a strong child; she had thrown herself on Russell, biting, scratching, screaming, at the top of her voice, and she was more than a match for him. Frank dragged her forcibly off her brother, escaping with the impression of her small teeth on his hand—it was no light thing to interfere with Baby.

“Oh, let me go! let me go!” she screamed; “don’t let him do it! don’t let him do it!”

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Of course I shall do it," said Russell viciously, and incontinently plumped down on his knees by a chair; "and I will pray that you may be made a better girl, too, Baby."

"Oh, oh, oh!" sobbed Baby, "I will tell mamma!"

It was no easy thing to hold her; Frank put her into a chair, clasping her arms behind her, and avoiding her kicking legs before he had breath enough to ask what was the matter.

"Get up, Russell," he said; "do you know it's near breakfast time? What on earth is the matter?"

"Russell is a wicked, wicked, *wicked* boy!" screamed Baby.

"Oh, do shut up, like a decent girl," said Frank, who had too many worries of his own just then to be as patient as usual.

Russell rose to his feet, and smiled with gentle superiority.

"She is such a baby; she doesn't understand," he said.

"He wants to perwent God from listening to me!" sobbed his sister.

"Silly little thing," said Russell; "she is always praying for babies, and I just told her, for fun, I would pray to God not to send one. It was all nonsense."

"No, no! I know you told Him not to send it," wailed Baby, in deepest grief, "and I have prayed every, every night, and now it will never come!"

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"I should think not," said Russell, "when such a naughty girl prays."

"I'll tell mamma!" screamed Baby, struggling with Frank.

He felt it was time to interfere.

"Russell, go downstairs," he said, "and do try and stop teasing your little sister——"

"But she will tell mamma," said Russell, "and mamma will be angry, for it's Miss Ross's way of praying."

"She won't tell," said Frank; "if you go away quietly it will be all right. She doesn't even understand."

And when Russell had gone he took Baby, much subdued, on his knee.

"See how you have hurt me," he said, and Baby fell to kissing the mark her teeth had made, in passionate penitence.

"Oh, dear Fluffy, I was blinded to do it!" she sobbed.

"Well, Babs, you are too old for this sort of thing," said Frank; "you really are. Russell was making fun of you."

"No, he wasn't," said Baby broken-heartedly; "he wanted to perwent God sending a baby, and I have prayed for years and years and years, and perhaps it would just have been coming. Oh, oh!"

Frank looked at her very gravely. He was older for that morning hour in his own room, and he spoke to her quite seriously.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Well, Babs, you be good, and it will come all right," he said.

"If I am good, will God send it?" said Baby, with hesitation.

"If you are a good little girl, I think so," said Frank in a low voice.

"Oh," said Baby, "when? To-morrow?"

"Not so soon as that," said Frank; "but you go on being good, and don't tell anybody—it's a secret between us—and I think it will come."

"Will it be a boy or a girl?"

"Now, you're asking too much! Wait till you see," said Frank, laughing.

"I think you had better pray, too, because then it will certainly come, as you are good," said Baby.

Frank put her down.

"That's enough, Babs," he said; "where's Miss Ross? You must go and get the ayah to wash away those tears."

And so it was Baby to whom the first news was given.

Both she and Frank were the graver all through breakfast for it, and afterward, as he was lighting his pipe, she crept up to him, twining herself round his legs till he stooped to her.

"I shall say," she whispered, "that if God will only send it, I shan't mind, even if it is *black!*"

"No, please don't say anything of the kind," said Frank hastily.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Violet, who had come in from her housekeeping with her hat on, ready to go out with Frank, asked what they were whispering about.

"It's Fluffy's and my secret," said Baby importantly, "a secret you know nuffing about. And *now* I am going to shoot some tigers."

Frank and Violet wandered into the garden, strolling about while he smoked, and pausing by the lake to watch a heavy native boat, slowly making its way across.

Frank walked along gravely, his eyes on the ground, most unusually silent.

"Why, Frank, how dreadfully serious you look," said Violet at last.

He looked up and smiled at her.

"I am thinking," he said, "whether I shall get you a pear or an apple to amuse you while I take Russell for a ride."

"Please don't think about it any more, then," said Violet, "for it makes you look quite ten years older."

"I am thinking," said Frank, his voice changing, "what care I must take of my darling."

"As if you had ever done anything else," said Violet.

In the shelter of the trees Frank slid an arm round her.

"Darling, I do love you so," he said.

"I think you love me better than usual to-day," said Violet, laughing a little.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"No, but I have found out how much it is," said Frank with a long sigh.

He could not give her up, and yet how slight was his hold on her.

Death might take her from him, and so fragile she looked he could not but remember that its shadow lay over her still.

Life might take her from him—any day, any hour might give her the truth, and how could he expect her to do other than turn from him then?

"Whatever comes you'll always believe I love you, darling?" he said.

"Yes," said Violet, turning her flower-like little face to his.

"God forgive me, and help me to take care of you," he said, looking at her; "whoever suffers, let me keep you at least from suffering. And I will!" he ended passionately.



O love! my love! for one answering kiss  
To my appealing passionate kisses, take  
My heart and soul. The one is yours to break,  
The other yours for either bale or bliss.

—LOVE-SONNETS OF LUCULLUS.



## CHAPTER

### XIV

**B**ARBARA had been nearly six months alone.

Six months is a long time for any one to spend in solitude, and solitude of the worst kind, solitude among a crowd.

To this impulsive, half-educated girl, with no resources of her own, and a heart full of bitterest jealousy, it had been six months of torture.

She had had nothing to draw her mind away from the one maddening thought of Frank and Violet together, and it was useless to try and drive it out of her head; it came back again and again, sometimes in one form, sometimes in another.

When she was out for a purposeless, lonely walk, it was with her; when she sat in her room, trying to read, or idly lounging beside the fire, waiting for a light, which it did not seem worth while to call for; most of all, when she lay in bed, seeking sleep vainly for the first time in the healthy twenty-five years of her life.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

In England, if her days had been dull and monotonous, they had at least been well filled, and little as she had cared for the society of her uncle and aunt, it had been better than none at all.

At night sleep had come readily without seeking.

But now the state of suppressed excitement in which she lived told on her in every way.

Sometimes desperate projects, born of her longing for Frank, drove her to resolutions of declaring their marriage at all costs; why should she suffer and live as an outcast for the sake of this puny girl who *would* not die?

Sometimes she brought herself to hopefulness, to thought of how slight a thing this dreary waiting would seem when it was over and Frank came back to her.

Of course he would come back to her—and just the same.

Barbara, with her love for him grown more passionate and absorbing, increased by every lonely day, told herself again and again that it must be the same with him. But deep in her heart she *knew* nothing could ever be between them as it had been before, and the bitter memory of their last interview could not be reasoned away.

There were times when she wept painful, scalding tears for the child that might have been hers.

"I was a fool—a fool," she told herself too late; "he *must* have come to me then—he must have

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

given up everything for me, and now he will never forgive me for what I have done."

But she could not really believe Frank would not forgive her, knowing she would forgive him all things.

The days of lonely suspense told upon her. She grew perceptibly thinner, her healthy color and her appetite failed, and almost for the first time in her life Barbara knew what it was to feel ill.

Her good looks had been largely dependent on her good health; she studied herself daily in the glass, with increasing anxiety, forcing herself to exercise and eating, haunted by the fear that Frank might find her changed.

She wrote to him still every day, but his answers were not always regular; and though she often sat down to write, resolved her letter should be cheerful and unreproachful, an irrepressible bitterness found its way in, in spite of all her resolutions, and sometimes her entreaties for him to come to her wrote themselves almost like threats.

One day, in the beginning of September, Barbara sat over the fire in her bedroom, nursing a bad cold which made her ache all over, and had a suspicion of influenza about it. She had had breakfast in bed, and got up late, more because she was tired of lying in bed than because there seemed any particular object in getting up. It was cold enough for a fire now, and it seemed to make the room less cheerless.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Barbara had not slept very well. There had been a big dance that night, and though there were no carriages to keep her awake by their rumbling, the returning dandies and their occupants had made a disturbing clatter of their own.

This morning she looked pale and ill, and very untidy, poor girl. Her blue serge dress was very shabby, and one of the elbows was out, her collar was crushed and a little soiled, and her hair was rough and rolled up anyhow.

There was no necessity for it. She had money and dresses enough, but there was nobody to see her but the ayah, and it never occurred to Barbara to dress for her own satisfaction.

She sat indolently by the fire, with a novel on her knee that she was not reading, and yawned wearily once or twice, wondering how she was to get through the day.

A little before its usual time Frank's letter came. There had not been one from him for two days, and she tore it open eagerly, with the premonitory pain at her heart with which she opened all his letters now. There was always sure to be something in them to hurt her, some sentence that rang coldly, or some expression or omission that touched her jealousy.

But to-day—Barbara sprang blindly to her feet, with a sudden impulse of uncontrollable excitement.

It was all right after all; she had been miserable

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

without reason; for he was coming to her—to-morrow he would be with her, and would he have come if he had not loved her still?

"Ayah, ayah!" she called, desperate with the need of telling the glorious news to some one. And when the ayah came, startled by the radiant, transfigured face of her mistress, Barbara burst out, in a voice which broke and shook with excitement:

"Ayah, the Sahib is coming! The Sahib is coming to-morrow!"

The ayah smiled and looked pleased. She was sorry for her mistress, and knew she was unhappy.

"I must go out," said Barbara, breathlessly; "I must send a telegram—get me my hat, ayah—get it quick—jeldi!"

"Memsahib bemahr (sick) hi—I take it?" the ayah suggested, but Barbara shook her head impatiently.

"I am quite well," she said, "quite well. I feel so well and so happy."

And she burst into tears.

Frank's letter had changed the world. It seemed to her inconceivable that five minutes ago she had doubted him.

Doubted him! Doubted *Frank*, her own husband and lover, who had sworn to her a thousand times that his love for her could never change, that as long as he lived he was hers, and nothing could ever come between them. What had she been dreaming

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

of to doubt him for a few short letters, a few carelessly written phrases?

Now he was coming to her, and all would be well.

Barbara, feverish with her cold and her excitement, could not sit still, and could not make the endless afternoon and evening pass.

She was too restless to do anything except read, over and over again, the short note in which Frank announced his coming, giving no reason, and using no word of affection beyond: "My darling Barbara," which began this letter, as usual.

But what did that matter? It would be so much better to say all those loving words to her a little later.

Hours ago he had started; he was on his way to her, and was getting nearer every minute.

Would the time never pass? Only seven o'clock—she seemed to have been waiting for *years* already!

It should be a happy meeting. Not one word of jealousy or reproach should pass her lips; there should be nothing mixed with the love of her greeting, and the memory of their last day together would be buried.

Eight o'clock. Eighteen long hours at least before she could see him.

And so Barbara counted all the hours as they passed—one more gone—one nearer their meeting.

Almost all the hours of the night. She tried to sleep, to make the time pass more quickly, but she

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

was quivering with an excitement which forbade sleep.

Several times an agitated, troubled doze came to her, and always when she awoke, she struck a hasty match to see how much time had passed, and was disappointed to find how little further the hands of the watch had moved.

Though she never once said so to herself, she knew the next day's meeting would decide her life.

Daylight came at last. She got up at six A.M. to be ready for Frank, who could not arrive till one.

At eleven she began to listen to stray footsteps on the possibility that by some wild chance the tonga might arrive before its time.

At twelve she sent the bearer twice to inquire if the special lunch she had ordered was ready, and had not been forgotten.

At one the table was laid, ready for him, with cold beef and hot chicken waiting in the kitchen, and in the room fresh flowers, in hastily bought vases.

Last time Barbara had thought of none of these things, and from her they meant very much. They embodied her intense anxiety, her subconsciousness that all things depended on this meeting, and that it was a struggle to the death between her and this unknown girl.

A few months ago these trifles might have made all the difference.

The tragedy of it was that they came too late.

At two o'clock Barbara, whose room did not look

## THE CHANGING OF THE MOON

It was the first morning she had been to the beach since the first morning she had been to the beach since the first morning.

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## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"You must be hungry," said Barbara, and it struck her at the time it was an odd sentence to be the first greeting between them; "I ordered lunch—let me call for the hot things."

"I—I am so sorry you troubled," said Frank, looking away from her; "but I did not know. I lunched after we got in with a fellow who came in the tonga with me."

"Ah——!" The exclamation came as a hurt cry, and a little pause followed it.

Then she said bravely: "What a good thing! It is so much pleasanter to have no interruptions."

But after that there did not seem to be anything to say.

"Had you a hot journey?" she asked; and he answered: "The first half was rather hot, but nothing to mind."

Then there was silence. Both felt it was impossible to continue to talk of his journey and the weather—they who had so much to say to each other.

Frank felt absurdly annoyed by the presence of the untouched lunch on the table and because Barbara had not ordered it away. He found himself wondering that he had never noticed before how rough and uneducated her voice was, and that her hands were large and broad, with ugly finger-nails. He felt an almost irresistible impulse to draw away his own hand from the clasp of hers, and it was with an effort that he restrained himself.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Are you glad to see me?" said Barbara in a low voice.

"Of course," said Frank, but still he did not look at her.

"Then kiss me, my husband—you have scarcely kissed me," said Barbara, her dark eyes full of a growing fear.

He kissed her.

And then she understood, and with his cold kiss the blow fell upon her.

But she would not acknowledge it to herself yet. She fought desperately for her chance of love and happiness.

"Come closer to me," she said, "and look at me. Darling, do you know you haven't told me you loved me yet? Of course I know it, but I like to hear it, Frank, don't I?"

He made no response to her piteous attempt to smile. The time had come when the blow must be struck, and a brutal, shameful blow it needs must be.

He drew himself away from her, rising to his feet.

"Barbara," he said slowly, "I do love you; but——"

He paused; in his tone all had been said, but in face of Barbara's white silence, it must be put into brutal words.

She said nothing, she hardly lived, while she waited with tense breath for her sentence.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"I shall always feel——" said Frank, and stopped, choked by his words.

"I shall always care for you, Barbara," he said; "there's no good saying I'm a brute—that's easily said. I—do not love you as I did once."

The words were spoken at last.

He turned away, and walked to the veranda door, where he stood looking out without seeing anything.

The silence grew unendurable, and yet more unendurable.

In the next room somebody suddenly began to play a rollicking polka, and having finished it played it over again, breaking down each time in the same chords. Then the music stopped as abruptly as it had begun, and silence again took its place.

"Frank," said Barbara in a low voice.

He turned at once, and took a few steps toward her.

"You love her?" said Barbara.

"I do."

"You have changed—*so soon?*"

There seemed little to say. The bald fact of the dead love lay between the two, and that once acknowledged, all was said.

Apology, excuse, was futile and impossible.

Barbara sat still, battling with sudden, sickening stabs of pain which seemed physical.

Frank felt he would have welcomed tears, re-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

proaches, anything to break that stunned quietude. It was not what he had expected.

"I can't understand," said Barbara, in a faint, bewildered voice.

Hot, stinging tears sprang to Frank's eyes. The bitterness and shame of the thing lay heavily upon him.



The same lips now, and not the same;  
What breath shall fill and reinspire  
A dead desire?



## CHAPTER

### XV

AT the club, an hour later, Frank wrote to Barbara.

Beyond the fact that he loved her no longer, their meeting had decided nothing, and before he left Murree something must be decided.

It was the unbearableness of suspense that had brought him there.

With the knowledge that he loved Violet had come the impossibility of living any longer from day to day as he had done heretofore.

He must arrange something with Barbara, though what that something should be he was not, even now, absolutely clear.

But Violet must be saved at all costs.

It was his new-found love for her that had given him courage to face an intensely painful meeting, he who had been trying all his life to avoid pain. He had thought of writing, but it was impossible to be sure that if he did Barbara might not be driven to do something desperate, perhaps to open declara-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

tion of their marriage, or a journey to Kashmir. Besides, it seemed the cruellest way of doing a cruel thing.

So he had come, with a polo meeting as a poor excuse for Violet, and now he sat, struggling to put on paper the things it had been impossible to say with Barbara's white, stricken face before him. It was hard enough to write them. Sheet after sheet was torn impatiently to atoms, sentence after sentence was crossed out, reconstructed, rejected.

There was no graceful or pleasant way of putting a thing that in itself was bad.

"Dear Barbara," he wrote at last, "it will be best for us not to meet again; it can only give us pain. I have no excuse to offer—the thing is done, and I have spoilt your life, and there is no use in saying I would give my salvation to undo what I have done. I have done a wicked, mad thing, and we are punished for it. What I am going to ask you to do is a great thing—to keep our marriage secret. It is not for my own sake—God knows I am not such a cur as ever to dream of happiness for myself again"—and as he wrote the words he honestly meant them—"it is for the sake of her we have injured. Remember, to declare our marriage now would only mean the separation of a prison—do you understand this?"

"Let me send you to England—let me try to make your life as bearable as possible, till some day, perhaps, we may meet again without too much pain.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Will you consent to this? I can see nothing else to be done."

Put into words, the thing seemed more crude and cruel than ever.

He was asking Barbara to give up everything, and what had he to offer? He was asking her to sacrifice herself utterly, to give up her rights to a woman who had been her successful rival. Why should she do what he asked of her, and asked her in words that looked so cold and unfeeling? But what could he say? What would it avail to call himself all the evil names he felt he deserved?

In despair Frank folded up the letter without re-reading it, and sent it to Barbara, and an answer came back at once, saying she must see him, nothing but that, in a few urgent words.

This letter of his had roused her a little from her stunned composure. It had brought her pain—not such pain as she would feel later, when the dulness of the shock had worn off, but still pain sharp enough to awaken her to the possibility that Frank might go without seeing her again.

Had he so utterly ceased to love her? It was impossible—it was *impossible* that a few short months should have utterly changed him—Frank, who had vowed a thousand times that years could not shake his love for her.

Barbara gave no thought to money or position now; she had forgotten her magnificent dreams. They had faded and become as nothing beside her

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

love for Frank long ago; she thought only of him.

She could not give him up—she would not. He was hers; loving or unloving, he was hers; no other woman had a right to dispute her claim, and no other woman should. She would not give him up.

The color flashed back into Barbara's cheeks and the light into her eyes. She was stronger than he, and she would not fail; he should be hers, cost what it might.

When he came to her—and come he must—he should never leave her again.

She walked up and down the room, quivering and trembling with excitement and passionate love.

When Frank came, unwilling, but with no choice but to obey, the change in her from the stunned, hopeless woman he had left a few hours ago was startling.

It was nearly nine o'clock. Frank had had an attempt at dinner; Barbara had neither eaten nor thought of eating.

The drawn curtains, the lamplight, made the room look less dreary—it, like Barbara, seemed to have awakened.

“You want to see me,” said Frank.

It was her last chance, and she knew it, bracing herself for the struggle.

“Yes,” she said, “I want to see you—because I *can't* believe what you have said to me.”

“It is true,” said Frank, with bowed head.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Barbara steadied herself, one hand on the table; she was trembling from head to foot.

"But, Frank," she said, "have you forgotten it is I that am your wife—I, not that other? Have you forgotten everything?—how happy we used to be together, how often you have told me that nothing could change your love?—that as long as we both lived nothing could come between us? Darling—sweetheart—I am not changed! I am just the same, and love you just as dearly."

She ended with a shaking voice, and went to him, clinging to him, kissing him, while he passively submitted. But with all the cruelty of a man who has once loved and loves no longer, he longed to shake her off; he was ready to sacrifice her for the sake of Violet's happiness.

In his utter want of response, his passive endurance of her arms around him—he, to whom the clasp of her arms had once meant the greatest happiness the world could give him—Barbara understood how lost he was to her, and her words grew desperate.

"Darling—darling—remember I have only you in all the world. I gave up everything for you—you made me love you—do you remember Bombay? Oh, you *can't* have forgotten everything so soon. Only say you love me—only that. For pity, say you love me, darling!"

"I *can't*," said Frank hoarsely.

"You can't?" said Barbara, catching her breath, "you can't now, this minute—perhaps not. But,



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Frank, you loved me once, and you will love me again. I can make you love me—indeed I can! *She* can't love you as I love, and I am your wife. My husband, you don't know what my love for you is—you don't know what it is when a woman gives herself body and soul to you, keeping nothing back. Frank, there isn't a thought of my heart that isn't yours, all yours. Oh, if I could only make you understand what you are to me, your love *must* come in answer!"

"It is too late," said Frank.

At the words Barbara's arms loosened their hold.

"You love her so much?" she said in a strange, choked voice.

"I love her with all my heart," said Frank distinctly.

Barbara gave an inarticulate cry of pain, like the cry of an animal wounded to death.

"And it is my own doing—my own doing!" she wailed, and cast herself face downward in a chair, sobbing great, heartbroken sobs.

Frank stood where she left him, full of a sense of miserable awkwardness. A cruel, unreasonable anger against Barbara filled his mind; why had she insisted on this last meeting, which was agony to them both? Poor, poor Barbara! His wrong toward her was the bitterest of wrongs, and he could do nothing to set it right. He could only stand there, a helpless spectator of her misery, and he could not help her to bear it.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

He wondered would it be best for him to leave her as she was, to slip softly from the room without further parting.

He was standing, hesitating and embarrassed, having almost made up his mind to do so, when Barbara raised her head, and turned a white, tear-stained face to him, holding out her hand.

"Frank, I *can't* bear it," she said faintly.

Her desolate look, her odd appeal to him for sympathy and comfort, in the wrong he had himself done her, went straight to Frank's heart. For the first time a real, self-forgetting pity drove all thought of everything but her suffering out of his head.

He knelt down beside her, taking her hand in his and kissing it softly. He could think of nothing to say that would not hurt.

"She can never be what I could be to you, and I am your wife," said Barbara. The passion had gone out of her voice, and she spoke faintly, interrupted by long, sobbing breaths.

"Dear," said Frank, "try to understand this. If I were to declare myself your husband now, I should be prosecuted and transported for bigamy. Do you see how mad we have been?"

He could not tell whether Barbara paused to thoroughly take in what he said.

"You want me to blot myself out, and leave you to be happy with her?" she said.

"You *know* I can never be happy," said Frank.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Barbara gave a sudden little laugh which struck him with a more bitter pity than her tears.

"Oh, yes," she said, "you will be happy enough. I know you, my dear; I know you very well."

Frank made no answer; all the time there had seemed very little for him to say. He knelt, stroking Barbara's hand, feeling miserable and ridiculous and uncomfortable about the knees all at once.

"Let me say good-by, dear," he said at last, with hesitation. And then Barbara made her last effort; in the quiet of the room she had been collecting all her strength for it.

A clock on the mantel-shelf struck eleven; they had been nearly two hours together.

As it struck for the last time, Barbara suddenly sat up, and threw her arms round Frank.

The change of position was unexpected. Frank, kneeling beside her, found himself drawn very closely to her, and the quick shivering and panting of her heart shook him too.

"I—I can't lose you," she said. "Frank, I will never ask to be called your wife—but I have nobody—nobody but you. Only promise you will come to me sometimes—promise I shan't lose you altogether—it is all I ask! You won't refuse me, darling—you *can't* refuse me, or I shall break my heart."

Frank tried to draw himself away from her embrace, but without actual roughness it was impossible.

"This is torture," he said.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"I love you, I love you!" whispered Barbara, her cheek on his.

"I *must* go," said Frank, breathing hard.

Always before she had found him weak; now, in the strength of his true love for Violet, he found resistance.

"I have been false enough," he said hoarsely. "I could not live if I was as vile as you want to make me! Let me go."

But she held him closely.

"Stay with me," she said. "Frank, you used to think me handsome once—you used to love to have my arms round you! Stay with me now—I will make you so happy—*darling!*"

Frank suddenly sprang to his feet, shaking her off roughly.

It was a bad moment, and a terrible scene followed. She would not let him go. She clung to him, sobbing desperately, refusing to be shaken off, half mad with despair.

He had to break away from her by sheer brute strength at the last.

He was afraid the hotel would be roused, and Barbara was beyond caring.

It was many a long day before the bitter memory of her last despairing cry ceased to haunt him.



I am not mad—I would to heaven I were !  
For then 'tis like I should forget myself :  
Oh, if I could, what grief should I forget !



## CHAPTER

### XVI

THE curious episode in Barbara's life which began that night always seemed to her afterward unreal and like a dream ; she never felt quite sure that it had really happened. Probably she was not quite responsible for her actions for the time being.

Frank, in breaking from her, had pushed her with some roughness into a chair, and for a time she lay there, half stunned.

Then she sprang up, strong in her intense excitement, and full of a bewildered idea of following him.

It was impossible she could have lost him, that in that moment he had thrown her aside and parted with her forever. She would find him, and he must listen to her then—he could not send her away from him through the night.

There was no one to heed what she did. She opened the veranda door, and slipped out into the night, hatless, shawlless, absolutely unconscious of the cold wind that blew her hair about her face.

It was a particularly bright, starlight night, and

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

she had no difficulty in finding her way. The telegraph office came as her first guide, and later on the post-office, and she turned unhesitatingly down the street toward the club.

It was only when she found herself standing in the bright light of the doors that she paused. She did not know if Frank was there or not, and if he was not she did not know where to look for him.

As a matter of fact, Frank, feeling in no mood to face any one, had gone straight to his hotel, drunk a couple of stiff pegs, and betaken himself to bed.

Barbara was a curious and conspicuous figure as she stood, with tossed hair and blazing cheeks and eyes, peering intently into the light which dazzled her.

Three or four men, fresh from a rubber of whist, were standing on the veranda, lighting their cigarettes before they mounted their waiting ponies. They were all startled by this strange apparition.

One of them, who was staying at the same hotel as Barbara, recognized her, and stepped up to her, with a whisper of her history, as it was guessed at in Murree, to the others.

He was a plump, cheerful subaltern, with a small black mustache—a good boy enough, with a youthful craving for an evil reputation.

He stepped up to Barbara, hoping he looked like a veritable Don Juan, and asked her boldly if she was looking for any one.

She began her answer eagerly.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"I want to know if——" she said, and then paused, with a confused idea that she must not ask for Frank by name.

"Is there any stranger here?" she said.

It was an odd question, oddly put, and somewhat puzzled the subaltern.

"There's nobody else here," he said, "and it's so late. Do let me have the pleasure of taking you back to the hotel."

"No, I can't go back," said Barbara.

"Then what do you want to do? Can't I help you?"

What did she want to do? Confronted with the question, she did not know. She did not know where to look for Frank, nor how to find him. Should she go to each hotel and search room after room till she found him? But she would not find him—she had lost him forever—he would never love her again.

She turned to the subaltern a face so white and despairing in the lamplight that he was startled.

"I don't know what to do," she said.

"Come back to the hotel with me, and we'll have some supper and a bottle of champagne, and forget all about it," he said. He was just up from the plains, and he wanted to enjoy himself; he admired Barbara immensely, and the sensation of being wild and dissipated was delightful to this really good boy. But he was a little nervous.

"Forget all about it!" said Barbara excitedly.

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"Yes—yes—yes! But you'll stay with me—you won't leave me alone?"

"Of course I'll stay with you," said the subaltern, encouraged and delighted.

It was wonderful what an easy conquest he was making. Even when, once out of the lighted street, he slipped his arm through hers and took her hand and kissed it, she only laughed out loud, a laugh which made him dimly uncomfortable.

"We'll forget everything," she said; "why should I be the only one to be unhappy?"

And then she was suddenly silent again.

The subaltern was a little afraid of her, though he was a sufficiently obtuse young man.

It was better when he had routed out a bearer, and succeeded in getting a rather scanty supper of champagne and biscuits. The champagne encouraged him, though he did not like it, and Barbara had her glass filled again and again.

She sat beside him, and she let him put his arm round her and kiss her as he chose.

"This is wicked, isn't it?" she said, with strange shining eyes; "if a man knew his wife behaved like this, it would make him angry, even if he didn't care for her any longer?"

"But *I* love you," said the subaltern, who had had several glasses of champagne.

"Don't talk of love," said Barbara recklessly, "it changes so quickly. Don't you think when a person is given up by the doctors she ought to die? What



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am I talking about?—don't go away—don't leave me alone!"

"Of course not, darling," said the subaltern; but in spite of the champagne he was not quite at his ease. This was rather an alarming young woman, both in her speeches and in her sudden silences.

"After all, you must go away," she said abruptly.

A wild idea had flashed through her mind; supposing Frank repented? Supposing he came back to her?

"You must go away! You must go away!" she said, all in a moment feverishly anxious to get rid of him.

The subaltern did not want to go; the champagne and Barbara's handsome face had fired him; but he could not resist the energy and determination with which she almost hustled him out of the room.

"Go, go!" she said; "if you will only go now, you can come again to-morrow—oh, yes, to-morrow—when the Kashmir tonga has gone. But go away now!"

"Will you promise never to send me away again?" he said tenderly.

"I'll promise *anything!*" said Barbara recklessly.

If Frank were to come before he went? Barbara had almost brought herself to believe he was coming. Probably she scarcely recognized the difference between night and day in the hours that passed, for she expected him every moment.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Sometimes, in despair, she sobbed aloud as she walked up and down; sometimes, growing equally irrationally hopeful, she shut her eyes, in the hope of opening them again to see him before her; sometimes she rushed to the veranda door and flung it wide to the cold night air, thinking she heard a footstep outside.

But when the daylight flooded palely in, making the flickering light of the lamp look wan and paltry, Barbara suddenly gave up hope and knew that Frank would never come back to her. And she flung herself on the bed, and gave way to desperate, heart-broken sobbing, till sheer exhaustion brought her sleep.

Two hours later, when the ayah woke her with her chota harizi, she woke to her first clear realization of what had happened.

Frank did not love her any longer; he was tired of her, and he had thrown her aside, sacrificing her unheedingly for his new love. He had calmly left her to go back to her unendurable life of loneliness.

But she would not go back to it—she would be happy and forget as he did—she would show him that she cared no more than he did, and then—*then*—she would declare their marriage, and separate him from Violet.

But to-day she would be happy and wicked and forget everything. Her hot anger helped her and dulled her pain.

“I don’t care,” she said, and sat and swallowed

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her breakfast without knowing what she was eating as a proof that she did not care.

Later she sent her bearer to the tonga office to inquire if Frank had gone, and laughed when the answer was brought to her.

"After all, I don't care," she told herself again.

When the subaltern came, feeling shy and doubtful of his reception, Barbara left him nothing to desire.

When he kissed her, she set her teeth, and thought: "Frank would feel that!" When he took her in his arms, she said to herself: "I wish, I wish Frank could see it, and he would not know how I hate it."

But she never thought of the subaltern.

Everything considered, and as this episode is not one that the subaltern—now a captain, and engaged to a charming girl at Home—would care to have revived, though he has not forgotten it, it is, perhaps, unnecessary to mention his name. Barbara never knew it, though she could have found it out easily enough. His name, his appearance, everything connected with him, was so absolutely uninteresting to her.

In the afternoon they went out, going for a walk through the woods at the Kashmir end, and choosing the "Lover's Walk," which Murree possesses, like most places that have walks at all.

Barbara was everything that could be desired, except that she sometimes forgot all about her com-

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panion, and had a reckless habit of walking too near the edge of the kud.

The susceptible subaltern was much flattered by the impression he thought he had made, and put down any strangeness the night before to the champagne.

"You have been very happy, too?" he said tenderly as they came back.

"Very happy—of course," said Barbara with a laugh.

"And we shall be happier still," said the subaltern, and drove away misgivings, and doubts as to whether three hundred rupees would cover his leave, as he had expected.

But a gallant man must order champagne for dinner under some circumstances, even if it seems probable that he will have to borrow from a bunniah to pay for it; especially as it is of use in giving encouragement when one is feeling shy, and in duty bound to make love to a rather alarming young woman. For the subaltern had, in truth, never made love to any one before, and stood in some awe of Barbara, who was half a head taller than he was, and so handsome.

Barbara was a little restless after dinner, but very gracious.

He found himself a veritable conqueror of ladies, and gained confidence, being all the more unprepared for the blow that came to him.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and they were sitting

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together on the sofa, not talking very much, for Barbara had all along been silent, and the subaltern had not very much to say for himself.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet.

"It is no good," she said, "you must go away!"

He sat where she had left him, amazed and disconcerted.

"Go away?" he said in dismay; "what do you mean? Go away *now*?"

Barbara turned her hot, troubled eyes on his rosy face.

"It's no good," she said; "I tried to forget, but I *can't* forget! I tried to be wicked, but it doesn't feel wicked!"

"It is very sweet," said the injured subaltern, getting up and trying to put his arm round her.

"Oh, I wish it was!" said Barbara; "but it doesn't make me forget, even for a minute. When I kiss you it doesn't even seem wrong—it is like kissing a baby!" she ended, despair in her voice, and turned away abruptly, clenching her hands together.

"Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?" she said.

The subaltern was too much offended to see anything comic in Barbara's speech, any more than she had done herself. But he was a kindly boy, and despite his disappointment and wounded vanity, the ring of desperation in her last words touched him.

"Can't I help you?" he said a little stiffly, and the

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white, stricken face she turned to him sobered and steadied him.

"How can you help any one who has lost everything?" she said. "Did you ever want to kill yourself, and feel you had not the courage? There were many times when I stood on the edge of the kud to-day, and longed to let my foot slip. But I couldn't do it."

The subaltern had never had the slightest desire to kill himself, and gazed at Barbara with great astonished eyes.

"But—I thought we were so happy," he stammered.

"And I thought I could forget," said Barbara, and something in her tone made him lose his wrongs in pity.

"Are you all alone here? Haven't you any friends?" he said.

"I am all alone," said Barbara, and suddenly flung herself down on the sofa in bitter sobbing.

The subaltern did not know what to do. His first cowardly impulse was to leave her, but he could not bring himself to do it, she seemed so utterly lonely.

He went over to her hesitatingly, and laid his hand on her shoulder, and she, half turning, caught it in both hers.

"Oh, don't go away! Please don't go away!" she sobbed; "it is so dreadful to be alone all through the night."

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"No, I won't go away," said the subaltern, and he knelt down beside her, and let his hand remain in hers.

And clasping it tightly, in her terror of being left to loneliness, Barbara, utterly exhausted, mind and body, sobbed herself to sleep.

The subaltern would not wake her. He had never known a worse grief than a wet polo day, but he felt that here was one he could not touch.

The admiration, the vanity, the passion she had awakened in him were subdued in the presence of a great trouble.

He knelt beside her, changing from one knee to another as his position grew unbearable, and when he could stand it no longer, he softly stretched out his other arm and drew a chair toward him, and carefully raised himself to a seat without awaking her. She only turned over, with a long, sobbing breath, and clasped his hand more tightly.

Presently the lamp went out and left them in darkness. A little later the subaltern himself fell asleep, in a very uncomfortable attitude, his hand still clasped in Barbara's.



I myself am Heaven and Hell,  
Heaven—but the vision of fulfilled desire,  
And Hell—the shadow of a soul on fire!

—OMAR KHAYYAM.



## CHAPTER XVII

“**W**HAT am I going to do?” Barbara said to herself next day, and she could find no answer.

That evening Frank would be with Violet—was she to leave them to be happy together? It was not to be borne. Frank had taken her up and cast her aside as lightly as if she had been his mistress, not his wife, heedless of what became of her—was she to submit passively?

She would go to Sir John Cooke and declare the truth. But even as the thought flashed into her mind, the memory of what Frank had said came to her. He had said that if she declared the truth he would be transported for bigamy.

And if he were? Even that would be better than to know he was with Violet.

But she could not do it; if she did, she knew he would hate her; and she loved him—with all her heart and all her strength she loved him.



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Her own conduct of the day before did not trouble her as it might have troubled a more sensitively organized person. Barbara felt herself no whit the worse for the subaltern's kisses, though she was conscious of intense relief in knowing that no unpardonable sin lay between her and her husband.

Frank must and would come back to her—at worst when Violet died. He had always turned to her when anything went wrong, and he would turn to her then. As for Violet, of course she would die; had not all the doctors said so? Had not Barbara herself seen death in her face?

Frank would come back to her and love her again. She told herself so, fighting down a dreadful mis-giving.

But could she bear the waiting again? Could she face once more the long days crawling one after the other, the dreadful, heartbreaking loneliness?

"No, you can't help me," she said to the subaltern; "you have helped me already—you have kept me from going mad, but you can't help me any more—no one can."

Yet she was unwilling altogether to give up the only person she had to speak to.

It was a little hard on him, though he was somewhat consoled when one or two men congratulated him on his good fortune, and he did not consider it necessary to explain, as he ought to have done.

Barbara made up her mind to wait. Perhaps she

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would have kept to her resolution, perhaps she would have found it too hard—it is impossible to say. At least Frank would have had a longer time before the blow fell but for his own letter.

He had written from Ghari, where he had spent the night, written, eager to say to Barbara by letter all the things he had not been able to say when they were face to face, to make an appeal she could not resist. To Frank, it seemed that everybody must consider Violet; he urged her certain suffering and her innocence upon Barbara, like a fool, and he was to suffer bitterly for his folly.

To Barbara, sitting in her room that afternoon, bracing herself to face the pain of the letter, each allusion to her rival was a stab.

Frank enclosed a cheque for fifty pounds, and began his letter by offering plans for her own life to Barbara. What would she care to do? Would she not prefer to return to England, or could she suggest any plan she would like better? He only wanted to do what he could for her, and it was her right that he should, though he knew nothing could even faintly make up for the wrong he had done her.

So far there had been no allusion to Violet, and Barbara skimmed through his words, without much heeding these plans she did not mean to carry out.

But now Frank put forward what he thought, being an inconceivable fool, was his strongest plea.

He and Barbara had both done wrong, and their

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punishment was bitter. She must believe, she must understand, that happiness was as impossible for him as for her, with the knowledge of what he had done ever before him as it must be.

But there was Violet. Perhaps if Frank had paused to consider the next words would have remained unwritten, and his life and Violet's might have been different. But in his haste, agitated and moved in the strongest degree by the memory of his parting with Barbara, he wrote a thing that it seemed to him must touch any woman's heart.

It was a time for special care and consideration for Violet now, he said, and wrote of the coming baby.

The shock to Barbara was great. She had never longed for children, that was not in her nature, yet the thought that Violet would be the mother of Frank's child brought her the most maddening jealousy she had yet felt. That Frank had been more than morally unfaithful to her she had guessed, not allowing her thoughts to touch the fear; but plainly presented to her, it brought her for the moment more acute pain than even when he had told her he loved her no longer.

"I cannot bear it—this is more than any one ought to have to bear!" she said, in a cry of real agony.

He asked her to sacrifice herself for Violet's sake, Violet whom she hated, *hated*, **HATED**, as she could not have imagined it possible to hate any one. She

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

could understand how people were driven to murder now; would she hesitate if she had in her power the woman who had stolen her husband's love from her?

And she was to sit still and suffer—because Violet was going to have a baby! She was to stand aside, and let her be happy with her husband and her child, usurping Barbara's place.

When would she have had the courage to do for Frank what Barbara had done—she, a little white-faced, spiritless girl—never—never!

Frank thought she was going to bear it? No, there were some things no one could bear. For Frank's sake she would have done much—done all—but for Violet's, nothing.

So she was not going to die; she was going to live and be Frank's wife, and the mother of his children—if Barbara would let her.

Barbara walked across the room, opened the door and called the bearer. She had made up her mind.

"Go and ask for my bill, and get the luggage together at once. I am going out to get a special tonga," she said.

She was a different person now that she had resolved on immediate action. She walked down the street to Dhanjibhoy's office with a firm, confident step.

"I want a special tonga," she said.

"To Pindi, madam?" said the baboo, who did not expect anybody to go anywhere else in September.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Suddenly a thought flashed through Barbara's head. If she went to Kashmir herself and denounced Frank he would hate her, he would never forgive her.

Why should she not go to Rahore, to Violet's father, and tell him the truth, making him promise that Frank should never know it was she who had betrayed him? Then, when Violet and he were separated, he would turn to her, and they would be happy together.

The thought, the decision, took only an instant.

"To Pindi," she said, after a pause which had been barely perceptible.

But there was no special tonga immediately available at this time of the year, when the demand was beginning to be brisk. There was a seat next morning in somebody else's special tonga, and Barbara said impatiently that that would do. So long as she went, she cared little how she went.

The next thing was to find out whether Sir John Cooke was still at Simla, or had returned to Rahore. Barbara was quite prepared to follow him to Simla, but it was a relief, in her anxiety for no delay, to find that he was to return to Rahore next day, the very day she was to start from Murree.

Barbara had forgotten her loneliness, she had forgotten everything except her resolve that this woman who had usurped her place should be punished.

The subaltern was completely forgotten, and

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when he came to see her next day she was gone. He felt it a good deal, and it spoilt his leave, which was hard enough, as he had no concern in the matter.



He is with her, and they know that I know  
Where they are, what they do: They believe  
my tears flow  
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me, fled to  
the drear  
Empty church to pray God in, for them!—I  
am here.



## CHAPTER

### XVIII

SIR JOHN COOKE was glad to get back to Rahore. The season at Simla had dragged to him most exceedingly, though he had gone to all festive gatherings where he had judged his duty lay, concealing his unconquerable shyness in a repellent stiffness of demeanor. The aide-de-camp who filled Fluffy's place was rather afraid of him, and avoided his company as much as possible, having pleasant pursuits of his own.

Sir John liked the society of young men much better than that of his own contemporaries, but he never sought it, conscious that they found him in the way, and that he was not one of those elderly men who can make themselves popular with their juniors. His aide-de-camp never guessed that his chief would have liked to see him otherwise than officially, or that the poor man was really very lonely.

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Sir John missed Fluffy's ready sociability; he missed his children; he even missed the constant jarring with his wife, which had culminated on the occasion when he had absolutely forbidden her to go and join Violet in Kashmir, and she—had gone.

But the accounts from Kashmir had all been excellent; week by week Violet's health had steadily improved. Frank had not forgotten to write often—it was the kind of thing Frank did not forget—and his letters, like Violet's, were full of happiness and hope.

There was a letter from Violet to meet Sir John in Rahore—a thoroughly happy letter, full of Kashmir and the children, with one or two contented allusions to Frank.

Sir John could write more freely and warmly than it was possible for him to talk, consequently Violet's answers were freer, and father and daughter were on much more easy terms by letter than they were when together.

Sir John, even as he walked round the garden after breakfast, sheltered by a huge white umbrella and followed obsequiously by the mali, was thinking to himself that after all he had done well in pressing on the marriage, and that Frank's hesitation had meant nothing, and he had been wise to overlook it. It pleased him to think this, for as a rule he was only too prone to condemn his own actions.

It was with this very pleasant thought in his



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mind that, turning from the inspection of a row of palms in pots, which looked the worse for the summer, he came face to face with Barbara.

She had reach Rahore that morning, and had come almost at once, only pausing, with rare prudence for her, to have breakfast and wash and change her dress after her hot, dusty night journey.

Her determination had neither wavered nor flagged, sustained by the thought of Frank and Violet together.

Sir John stepped up to her, polite as usual, trying to make up his mind if the lady was one he ought to know.

A gray helmet and a white drill dress, somewhat crumpled (for Barbara was no packer), were as indistinctive as a uniform.

"Lady Cooke is absent from home," said Sir John, "but can I have the pleasure of doing anything for you?"

"I have something very important to say to you, Sir John," said Barbara, and he gathered from her voice that she was not quite and absolutely a lady.

"I am at your service," he said; "shall you find the veranda too hot?"

"It won't do for what I have to say," said Barbara.

Her manner struck him as strange; her suppressed excitement showed itself through her short, abrupt sentences.

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Sir John took her into his study, and called for some one to pull the punkah. The room was still in its summer darkness, and after the glare outside struck cool and refreshing.

He pulled a chair under the punkah for his visitor, and sat down near her.

"Now," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"I have something to tell you," said Barbara, with dry lips.

It was a desperate game she was playing, and she was betraying Frank.

"It is something dreadful," she said; "Frank—Frank is my husband."

Sir John only stared at her; he did not at all understand what she meant nor to whom she was alluding; not even the smallest misgiving had reached him, and she saw that the thing would be to him so incredible that she must put it in the plainest words before him.

"If Frank had even *pretended* to love me I would not have done it," she thought.

"Frank is not your daughter's husband," she said, and so hard were the words to say that her voice sounded strange and unnatural to herself; "he is *my* husband; he was married to me first."

Sir John sprang up from his chair, and the punkah caught him in the face, which filled Barbara with a wild, hysterical inclination to laughter.

"What do you say? Who are you talking about? Frank—Frank *who?*" he said, stammering.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Frank Scott—Lord Francis Scott," said Barbara. Her voice shook; it occurred to her as a hasty thought that Sir John would think it was from emotion, and would never suspect it was that absurd, incongruous inclination to laughter.

In the novels which she affected, the appearance of a missing wife was a frequent incident, but it had never been quite like this—an interview with a solemn old gentleman, who had to dodge the punkah when he wanted to face her.

It was tragic enough in truth, but it never once occurred to Barbara that Sir John was a person to be pitied.

"Frank Scott—my son-in-law—I think you must be making a mistake," said Sir John quietly, and he resumed his seat. She had startled him for a moment, but the thing was too absurd, too incredible to bring conviction.

"Frank married me in Bombay," said Barbara; "I don't know the name of the church, but I can tell you where it is, and you can easily find out. The clergyman's name was Clark, and we were married on the day after we landed."

She had considered the sentence in the train the night before, and brought it out steadily and monotonously.

"Good God!" said Sir John; "do you know what you are saying? You are *mad!*"

"Do I look mad?" said Barbara.

She felt this would have been the moment to pro-

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duce her marriage lines, and she had never read of a heroine who was without them; but whether Frank had them, or the clergyman, or even what they exactly were, she did not know. So she could only repeat her statement.

"You can wire to Bombay," she said; "it is easy to find out."

Sir John's face was not one to show emotion; there was nothing but a sudden increase of rigidity to betray the awful dismay Barbara's words brought him.

It was inconceivable, incredible, but the woman did not speak or look like a mad woman, and somehow her manner brought doubt in a shock.

"It is impossible," said Sir John; "Frank Scott is married to my daughter; he married her here in Rahore."

"But he married me first," said Barbara.

"It is impossible," Sir John repeated, but in such a pained, puzzled voice that it was easy to see her words had had their effect.

"It is true," she said; and a long silence fell between them.

Sir John sat, leaning his head on his hand, his face hidden. Barbara faced him, quivering with excitement.

"But I can't see any motive—I can't see any reason," said Sir John; "why should Frank do this thing?"

"It was I who persuaded him," said Barbara;

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"we thought your daughter was dying, and we were so poor; it would have ruined Frank if we had not done it."

Everything she said, every reason she gave, seemed to make this thing more possible, and yet it was not possible. The motives, Barbara herself felt as she presented them, sounded so bald and inadequate.

"I can't believe it," said Sir John; and feeling his words uncourteous through his distress, he added: "There must be some mistake."

"You will find Frank will not deny it," said Barbara. Somehow, the confident, accustomed tone with which Frank's name fell from her lips struck Sir John with irrational conviction of the truth of what she said.

"Then he is a scoundrel," he said, and the strong word came hotly from his lips.

Barbara flamed up for his defence.

"He is not! he is not!" she said; "he meant to be kind to her, and he *has* been kind. He meant that she should never know, and all the doctors said she was dying."

Sir John's face was hidden; she could not see how he winced before her words.

"And he didn't even care for her! How could he do it?" he said, half to himself. He did not believe yet, but Barbara's confidence was gradually carrying conviction.

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"No, he cared for me," said Barbara; "he does not care for her; he loves *me!*"

She told the lie firmly, eagerly, almost believing it as she said it; she could not have borne to put the truth in words.

Sir John raised his head and looked at her.

"If it is true, what do you want me to do?" he said.

Barbara leaned forward, clasping and unclasping her hands excitedly.

"Not much," she said; "I don't want you to do much. Your daughter may keep her name as Frank's wife before the world. I agree to that, if you will promise not to tell Frank I have told you, and if you will separate them."

She stopped, with dry lips. "They must be separated," she said; "you know—you feel that is right? But she may keep everything but him——"

"She will die," said Sir John dully.

Barbara turned away her face to hide the sudden look that flashed into her eyes. Was it upon this she counted?

Sir John rose slowly.

"You must kindly leave me to think," he said; "this has come as a great surprise—a surprise. I will telegraph" (he could not have said wire under any emergency) "to Bombay, as you suggest. The clergyman's name, I think you said, was Clark? I

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will communicate with you later. You must excuse me; this news has disturbed me."

He accompanied her politely to the door, and she wondered she had not noticed before how old and stooped he was.

Sir John went back to his study, with black despair settling upon him.

"My poor little Violet," he said, and bowed his gray head on his arms.

It was all his fault—all. He had urged the marriage, and he had not been blind to Frank's unwillingness; he had only been determined to ignore it. He had urged it on because he believed Violet's happiness and any possibility there might be of her life depended upon it, and he had not stopped to think if he might be wronging another woman.

And now Violet must be punished for his wrongdoing—if it were true.

He clutched eagerly at the hope left to him, while he felt uncertain how to proceed. A telegram to the clergyman from him would at once draw attention to the marriage, and might bring about immediate publicity; a letter would be the same; and he could not sit and wait for the answer to a letter.

His mind was made up; he would go to Bombay at once, and find out the truth.

Sir John did not pause on his decision; he called the bearer at once, and sent him for his A.D.C., to make the necessary arrangements for his departure, and that afternoon he was in the train.

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One day in Bombay put him in every possession of his proofs. There had been no attempt at concealment; that there had been no previous discovery was due to chance, not to any forethought on the part of Frank. His name was in the register, signed in his own careless hand; all he had done by way of precaution was to omit his father's title, and write his name only. But there had been no further effort at concealment.

Sir John came back a miserable man; and he had one more interview with Barbara, in which he humbled himself to make proposals that no one who knew him would have credited.

He had lived in an atmosphere of conventionality all his life, he had loved conventionality, and made it his god. He had bowed down before social customs and let them rule him with an iron yoke, and it was beyond the power of any one who knew him to conceive Sir John as anything but intensely correct.

But for love of his daughter he bent himself to entreaties, to bribes—anything, if Barbara would only stand aside and leave things as they were. It would be for such a little time, he said, only that Violet might die in happiness.

And at this Barbara flashed out, saying it was no use to hold that before her any longer; Violet was going to live, not die, and she had given her mercy long enough, she had borne it long enough, and she would bear it no longer. If Sir John would not de-



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clare the truth, she would declare it herself. She wanted Frank—Frank—nothing but Frank!

“Then there is no more to be said,” said Sir John, rising gravely; “I will go to Kashmir and tell my daughter the truth, and being the truth, she must bear it.”



They think that nothing will happen because they have closed their doors, and they do not know that it is in the soul that things always happen, and that the world does not end at their house door. —MAETERLINCK.



## CHAPTER

### XIX

**F**RANK and Violet had had more than a week together since he had parted from Barbara.

He had come back with one or two lines in his forehead and a sharp pain in his heart; but after a little time with Violet he could not help being happy and sometimes forgetting Barbara.

Was the memory of a woman wronged and no longer cared for ever enough to take the blue out of the sky and the green from the grass to a man daily and hourly with the girl he passionately loved?

Frank, at least, only felt the remembrance of Barbara's trouble now and then in a sharp stab of pain at the contrast in their lives, and it showed a change in him that he was not able to cast all thought of her aside.

That she had not answered his last letter brought him uneasiness, not untempered with slight relief. He had written once again, renewing his proposals, and told himself that Barbara must see her best and only course was to accept them.

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It was hard on her—terribly hard, but Violet must be saved.

A sense of security actually grew up in Frank's mind on this slight foundation. His life and Violet's moved in such calm, happy regularity, that now, without Barbara's disturbing letters, it seemed impossible to believe that a word might destroy it.

He and Violet only wanted to be together, and together they were all day long, almost for every hour of the twenty-four.

Violet was wonderfully well, and Frank never forgot his watchful care lest she should be overtired or worried. They still kept their secret from Lady Cooke; Violet could not face the idea of telling her, and Frank felt he completely sympathized with her in this.

They were very happy; it was a perfect week, worth many a lifetime.

The last day they spent on the lake as they had spent so many. It was a day of sunshine and fresh breezes, as perfect as a Kashmir September day can be; a day to make one feel that only happiness is in the world, and that every one in it has a right to be happy always.

Frank and Violet had no presentiments. They went out in the little rowing boat he had got from the club, and threaded their way among the floating gardens, all white with water-lilies. Violet tried to pull one up with its whole length of stalk, but it snapped off at a foot. A little duck came swimming

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and diving, and Frank wished he had brought his gun.

On the way back they passed a large brown snake, swimming across the lake, and Violet insisted on waiting long enough to make sure it was not swimming toward their garden.

They went home very slowly, for there was no hurry—there never was any need for hurry—and they had tea under the trees, though the mosquitoes made this a doubtful pleasure; and then Frank read to Violet, and when he was tired Violet read to Frank. The children, for a wonder, had betaken themselves to their own pursuits, and Lady Cooke had received a large batch of Christian Science papers, and stayed in her own room to read and meditate upon them.

After dinner she went away again, and Russell was presently sent to bed, and Frank and Violet sat together by the open window of the drawing-room.

“What a delicious evening!” said Frank; “if it’s like this to-morrow, and you are feeling well, we might go over to the Nasim Bagh in the morning and dig up some lily roots.”

“Let us put that off till next day,” said Violet, “and have a lunch early and go into Srinagar by boat.”

“All right,” said Frank, “if you don’t think it will be too long an afternoon for you. Vi, I just want to go down to the stables; I won’t be any time.”

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"Let me come, it is so nice out," she said; but he shook his head.

"You mustn't overdo it," he said; "you know you have not even been to lie down this afternoon."

"Why, I have been lying in a chair most of the time."

"That's not the same thing. Lie down on the sofa now, there's a darling. I must take care of you, you know. There you are—is that comfy?"

Was it a sort of instinct that made Frank pause at the door, and finally come back to stoop over her and kiss her again?—a sort of tardy presentiment that he would never again see that happy smile, nor have her eyes turned to him, full of confident love?

"You do look sweet, my pet," he said softly, with a quick pang to see how very frail she was still.

Then he went out, missing by perhaps five minutes a traveller who had just arrived from Murree.

Sir John had not written to announce his coming. It had seemed to him that, knowing what he knew, he could not write, and he had thought the surprise of his sudden arrival might in some way help to prepare Violet.

He had not been at once able to get a tonga to bring him on from Srinagar, and rather than wait, he had walked. He must get in before Violet had gone to bed and it was too late; it seemed to him impossible that he could spend a night under Frank's roof.

So it was that there was no notice of his presence;

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he came quietly along the garden walk, and looked in through the window at Violet.

She was lying on the sofa, with a huge pink pillow behind her head where Frank had tucked it; her thin cheek was resting on her hand, and she looked straight out before her with dreamy, happy eyes.

She was thinking and planning for the years to come. Surely she would get well now, and then, when their holiday time was over, she and Frank would go home to England. She hoped he would not go back to his regiment; he should go into Parliament instead, and they would have a place in the country, because Frank would like to farm, and to hunt in the winter. They would have plenty of money if they were not reckless. In her secret heart she knew that the farming and hunting part of the project would suit Frank better than the political career. But while she believed she considered him dispassionately, she had a faith, born of love, that when he chose to exert himself there was a fund of hidden cleverness at his command.

Violet was almost facing her father, and her eyes seemed to look straight at him. He had known she was better, but as he saw her, delicate and frail as she still was, she seemed to him as one risen from the dead, when he remembered how he had last seen her.

And she looked so happy, smiling to herself as she lay there, as fancies floated through her head.

Sir John stood outside, gathering courage to go in.

It was a hard thing to do, a bitterly hard thing; it

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seemed to him it would have been easier but for this glimpse of her, in her happy security.

But the thing had to be done; there was no use in waiting.

Sir John stepped in through the open window, and stood still, dazzled by finding himself in the light.

"Father!" said Violet, and sprang up from the sofa, running to him.

He took her in his arms and kissed her, feeling as he did so that he, who had come to destroy all her happiness, had scarcely a right to kiss her.

"What a surprise!" said Violet; "it is the only thing that was wanting, father, to have you. Don't I look well? Have you seen Frank? How did you get here so quietly?"

Her words followed each other gaily; as a married woman, she had gained confidence, and lost much of her constraint with her father.

Her mention of Frank recalled him to his task, half-forgotten in the joy of seeing her so much better.

He hesitated for a moment, with the thought of appealing to his wife for help, but felt she would be worse than useless.

"Violet," he said, "be brave. I have bad news for you."

He felt her hand tighten suddenly on his arm.

"Frank?" she said; "has anything happened to him?"

Then the color grew back in her cheeks, as she

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realized the absurdity of imagining her father had come from Rahore to tell her of an accident to Frank, who had only just left her.

"I have not seen Frank," said Sir John.

"Then, as he is well, and you and mother and the children are here—why, it can't be very bad," said Violet.

"It is very bad."

"Well, tell me," said Violet; "if it worries you, of course it is bad. I suppose it is something about money."

She spoke of this possibility with the most airy and contemptuous lightness.

"How can I tell her?" Sir John thought, feeling his words had in nowise prepared her.

But there was nothing in the world would have prepared Violet.

"Sit down," he said; "Violet, you are a brave girl. Will you try and bear what I must tell you?"

His unusual manner, the shake in his voice, startled her, and made her realize that this unknown thing was very serious to him.

She sat down, looking at him with a certain uneasiness in her pretty, happy face. But it was for him she was uneasy; for herself she felt secure. What trouble could reach her when all she loved were safe?

"I can bear anything," she said, "but what can there be to bear?"

Sir John cleared his throat twice before he spoke;



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it seemed to him it would have been an easier task to take a knife and stab his daughter to the heart.

"It's about Frank I want to speak," he said.

"Frank!" said Violet; "he'll be in directly; won't you wait?"

"No," said Sir John hurriedly, "I can't wait. Frank is—we are all mistaken in him. He—has treated you cruelly."

Sir John sat gray and stiff and upright on the sofa, and longed for the power to make his words less bald and crude. But it would have made no difference; the thing he had to say would have been no easier to hear clothed in soft speech.

Violet, with a quick movement, had drawn away from him, and was on her feet, her small figure quivering with indignation, her blue eyes full of most unwonted anger.

"Father!" she said, "do you know what you are saying? Do you know you are speaking of Frank—of my husband?"

"I am speaking of a man in whom we have all been mistaken; and I have come to take you away from him."

Violet faced him fiercely.

"Father, I can't believe I understand what you are saying. You have come to take me away from Frank?" She paused, with a sudden, angry laugh.

"You imagine I will go?—you *dream* I would leave him?"

"You will when you know he is unworthy."

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"Not if I knew him to be as unworthy as I know him to be good and true—I would not!" said Violet, in an outburst.

A pause followed her words. Sir John, feeling awkward in his sitting position, rose clumsily to his feet, almost cowering before his angry daughter.

Violet, whose wrath was never enduring, softened suddenly.

"I didn't think you would listen to anything against Frank," she said; "but as you have, father, I am glad you came at once to have it explained. What have they been telling you?"

Sir John looked at her and turned away his head.

"I knew it would be hard to speak, but I did not know how hard," he muttered.

"You had better tell me," said Violet proudly; "you need not be afraid to tell me. No false stories about Frank will worry me."

And then Sir John spoke out desperately.

"Violet," he said, "you are mistaken in thinking yourself Frank's wife. You are not his wife."

He took a step toward her, ready to be her support should she faint; but Violet was not at all inclined to faint.

She drew back with a strange little laugh.

"Now," she said, "I know you are joking!" Then turning on him passionately: "How can you speak to me like that? You should not say such things to me, even as a joke—I will not have it!"

"My poor child," said her father, and put out his

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

hand to her; but she drew away impatiently and looked at him curiously.

"Somebody has made you believe it," she said, "and I shall never forgive you for believing it. Father, you must be mad! You know I am Frank's wife—you know we were married."

"It is not on hearsay I come to you, Violet," said Sir John; "I had faith in Frank, too. When he married you, my poor child, he had a wife living—he has a wife living now. I made myself very sure before I came to you."

For an instant she looked at him with such horror in her eyes that he thought belief had come to her.

Then she flashed out an indignant exclamation.

"Oh," she said, "how dare you come to me and say this?"

"My darling, it is as hard for me——"

"You make me hate you!" she said passionately. "I was so glad to see you, and I was so happy, and now it is all miserable! Oh, I wish, I wish Frank would come in!"

And as if in answer to her wish, there was a step on the gravel outside, and Frank's merry whistle.

"Hullo, Vi!" he said; "I'm sorry I've been kept so long. You ought to be in bed, my sweet."

He had come into the room as he spoke, but, dazzled by the light, he at first saw nothing.

Violet ran to him, and threw her arms round his neck with a cry of relief.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Now you are here, Frank, and it's all right," she said.

Frank looked round bewildered; for the first moment there was only bewilderment in his mind as he held Violet to him, and stared at Sir John, who stood a little apart—an enemy. Then, as he looked, his face changed, and a gray pallor grew upon it, the pallor of a man in deadly fear. It was in itself a confession; but Violet, her face buried in his shoulder, saw nothing.

There was a sort of waiting pause, while they stood there, and Sir John hung his head like a guilty man.

Violet broke the silence eagerly.

"Frank! Frank! I think father is mad!" she said. "What do you think he has come to tell me? That I am not your wife—I not your wife!"

She felt him start at her words, but it was only natural they should bring a shock of surprise, and she looked at her father proudly and confidently from the shelter of his arms.

"I only wish you could deny it," said Sir John, who had seen Frank's face.

"There, Frank!" said Violet, "it's some ridiculous mistake, not worth denying; but for father's sake, just tell him it's absurd, and we will try and forgive him."

But Frank was silent still; he had not spoken since he had seen Sir John.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Deny it, deny it!" said Violet, and gave him a little shake in her eagerness.

"He can't deny it," said Sir John.

"Violet," said Frank hoarsely, "let me go."

At his strange voice she suddenly began to tremble.

"Let you go?" she said; "what do you mean, Frank? Have you gone mad too?"

But he gently loosened her clinging arms, and for a moment she stood between them, looking from one white face to the other with bewilderment.

"What does it mean?" she said piteously; "it is all so sudden, I don't understand, Frank——"

But for once he let an appeal from her go unheeded.

She, with the world reeling to her, utterly perplexed, looked pitiful indeed, standing there alone.

"Father," she said suddenly, "will you leave us together, Frank and I? Then it will be all right. He will not deny it before you, and I don't wonder he won't," she said passionately, "when he knows you doubt him. But he will explain to me, and then I can make you understand your mistake."

And Sir John left them together, creeping from the room as a criminal.

For a few moments the two that were left stood facing each other, in a silence only broken by her panting breaths. Then she went to him, clasping her arms warmly round his neck, drawing down his stony face to hers.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"My darling," she said, "you never thought I believed it? Father has been deceived in some way we don't understand yet. But I—kiss me, my husband—I know better—sweetheart——"

Her soft hands, trembling a little, drew down his face to hers.

"Never mind," she said, "I can't understand it yet, but father only wants you to deny it—that is all you need do."

"I *can't*," said Frank.

Violet's arms slipped from his neck; she stood and looked at him.

"You said—what did you say?"

"I can't deny it."

The blow was struck at last. His words fell on silence, a silence in which Violet's happiness was buried, with her faith in her husband.

When she spoke it was in an odd, colorless voice, not like her own.

"You mean—it is true?"

"My God, this is torture!" said Frank hoarsely.

"It is true?"

He made no answer; he turned away from her, leaning against the mantel-shelf, his face hidden.

Violet came to him, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"I can't believe—I don't understand," she said;

"I am very stupid, and you will have to say it plainly—am I not your wife?"

"Before God you are!"

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"There is—some one else?" she persisted.

"There is."

"Oh, Frank, how could you do it!" said Violet faintly.

The weakness in her voice struck him sharply. He turned suddenly and caught her in his arms, and carried her to the sofa, kneeling before her, his face tense with pain and despair.

"My darling, my little sweet—I have killed you—and I would die to save you!" he said brokenly.

"It is—it must be—some dreadful mistake," said Violet. "Frank, at least you did not know—tell me you did not know—you thought she was dead! Tell me that at least—say it!"

"I can't say it—I can't!"

At his words she turned from him for the first time, drawing her hands from his.

"Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" she said, under her breath.

"My darling, my darling, don't cast me off," said Frank passionately; "I'm not fit to touch you, and you can't forgive me, but I can't live without you—God knows how I love you!"

"But what can I believe?" said Violet faintly. The lost, puzzled look in her face showed her bewilderment. She put her hand gently on Frank's, drawing his down from his convulsed face.

"I don't want to be unkind," she said.

"Darling," said Frank, "this is true, that I love you—that I care for nothing and nobody in the world

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

but you. Sweet, you won't let them separate us? I have been wicked, and your suffering kills me, but you won't let them take you away! Remember how young we are, how much of our lives is left. Darling love——"

But Violet started up from his side with a cry.

"Oh, I am choking—choking!" she said, and before he could reach her she fell forward at his feet on the floor, with a bright red stream staining her blue dress.





As much as in a hundred years she's dead,  
Yet is to-day the day on which she died.

—ROSSSETTI.



## CHAPTER

### XX

“HOW is she?” said Frank.

Sir John shook his head. There had been no explanation between them, nobody had been able to think of anything but the dying girl, and they had exchanged no words since they had parted in the drawing-room.

Frank had stood all night outside the room to which she had been hastily carried, sometimes asking a question of a messenger from the sick room, oftener only searching a face with burning eyes.

“You have killed her,” said Sir John.

“It is best she should die—*now*,” said Frank quietly.

“I blame myself for having pressed the marriage, but, Frank, why didn't you tell the truth? I trusted you with my daughter——”

“I can't think—I can't remember now,” said Frank impatiently, putting his hand to his head in a dazed, mechanical way.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

He looked so strange, so unlike himself, with all the carelessness gone from his blue eyes and the youth from his face, that Sir John was silent.

It was Lady Cooke, joining the stricken men for a moment, who spoke.

"You here?" she said to Frank, in a voice that stung; "you dare to stay here where your presence is an insult?"

"I must stay till I know," he said.

"Oh, you may know now! You have killed her—you have hurt her to death."

Lady Cooke was beside herself, driven out of her forced calm. Shocks had crowded upon her in the night, and they had been more than she could bear.

Over her daughter's dying bed she and her husband had exchanged bitter words as enemies. She believed it in her power to save Violet's life, curing both the broken blood-vessel and the other trouble that had come upon her, would her husband but send the doctor away, and allow her to rouse the unconscious girl and tell her all was well.

"You have struck her down and my husband forces me to stand aside and let her die," she said.

"There is nothing to be done," said Sir John.

"And yet, believing that, you will not stand aside and leave me free. If doctors themselves admit they can do nothing, why will you not at least give me my chance!"

"She shall be left in peace," said Sir John; "I will not have you disturb her."

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

And they looked into each other's eyes with bitter anger.

"It is best she should die," said Sir John, as Frank had said.

Frank heard unheedingly. Nothing concerned him now, his whole mind was concentrated on waiting. He did not even pause to wonder how the discovery had come; enough that it had come, and that he had known at once that denial was impossible and that all was over.

Only a few hours ago he and Violet had been so happy, so full of plans for the future. Now he had killed her, and it seemed to him he had always known the blow would kill her when it fell.

At present he was not conscious of feeling much; he just waited, waited all through the night and all through the following day.

The doctor and nurse, who did not know the truth, were sorry for him, and the nurse once or twice brought him something to eat, which he swallowed mechanically.

Sir John and Lady Cooke took no notice of him, watching each other jealously, sharing their unfriendly vigil.

Late in the evening, when Violet first opened her eyes comprehendingly, they were both in the room.

"Frank," she said, in such a faint whisper that her mother only just caught the words.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Presently, darling, presently," she said, and Violet, only half conscious, closed her eyes again and lay still.

They were giving her constant stimulant, and perhaps it was this that roused her a little some hours later.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock, and she had remained nearly twenty-four hours semi-conscious, as at the first moment when they had carried her to her hastily arranged bed.

Now, she opened her eyes wide, smiled faintly to the anxious faces round her, and whispered Frank's name again.

This time she would not be denied.

"I have not forgotten," she said, in her breathless whisper.

"But it will agitate you—the doctor won't approve," said Sir John, hating to think of Frank with her.

"It won't hurt me now," said Violet, and he felt it would not. Troubles of the earth were growing very small to her.

So she had her way.

And at the sight of her white face, with the old loving look in her eyes, Frank's sullen apathy gave way, and he threw himself on his knees by her bed, burying his face in the clothes, shaken by terrible sobbing.

Violet did not speak at first. She lay still, with her hand resting lightly on his fair hair.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"It is not because I am dying?" she said; "you know that is best?"

"I wish—I was dying too!"

"That will be—your punishment—to live, darling."

"My punishment is to have made you suffer."

"That's all over," said Violet faintly; "I don't understand, but I know you love me; and we have been very happy."

"God knows we have, my treasure."

"And I should never have been strong or well. Frank, if you have a duty to somebody else——"

But he stopped her words with an exceeding bitter cry.

"Oh, my love, my love! I can't bear it! My wickedness has lost you forever!"

"Not forever, dear, I am sure," said Violet softly.

Frank clasped her thin hands, as if he would keep her by force.

"I can't let you go! I can't let you go!" he said.

"Hush, my sweetheart," said Violet, and drew him close.

\* \* \* \* \*

The whole long night through he sat beside her, holding her hand in his. The end was coming very near, and no one came between them.

Once, when they brought brandy to her, she

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

turned her head from it with a sigh, and Frank pushed the nurse's hand aside.

"Let her be," he said.

And the doctor, who was in the room, bowed his head in assent.

"Leave them together," he said to Sir John; "it will not be long, and I can do nothing. See, a sure sign."

He pointed to Violet's free hand which lay outside the coverlet, ceaselessly plucking at it with restless fingers.

So Sir John stood aside once more, leaving the first place to the man who had no right to it, but who had it all the same.

And they left them together.

About six o'clock Violet opened her eyes.

"It is getting very dark," she said.

"Morning is coming," said Frank, drawing the lamp nearer to her.

"You aren't going away?"

"No, darling."

"Are you tired?"

"I shall have time to rest."

"You will be very lonely, poor boy," said Violet softly.

"Lonely! Oh, my God!"

"Hush, darling. You will remember I shall be waiting for you?"

"I will try—to be fit——"

A little later she asked him to kiss her, and to

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

raise her a little that his arm might go round her, and then she closed her eyes contentedly, and did not speak again.

Two hours afterward, still held closely in his arms, they found she was dead.



All see, since her most piteous death,  
That day and night, and heaven and earth and time,  
And all things hoped for or done therein,  
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief.

—SHELLEY.



## CHAPTER

### XXI

THEY buried her next day in the little Srinagar graveyard under the chenar trees.

It was all over, with the terrible swiftness of Indian death and burial, before forty-eight hours had passed from the evening when she and Frank had sat together and planned for the future.

The real circumstances of the case were left in silence by mutual, unspoken consent of the three who knew them.

The doctor, surprised by the sudden relapse of his patient, had no clue to its cause.

Everybody was very sorry for the young husband, left desolate so suddenly, and most people remembered Violet's sweet face and Frank's devotion to her.

Many of the wreaths of white flowers which covered the coffin came from strangers, touched by the pathetic little story.

And Sir John and Frank stood side by side at the grave.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

When all was over, a terrible pause had to be faced in the lives of those left behind.

Their mutual sorrow could not draw them together. When they met through the long afternoon and evening it was in silence with averted faces.

Sir John and Lady Cooke had exchanged no words since Violet's death. Lady Cooke went about with a stern, set face, with passionate anger against her husband, almost obscuring what she felt toward Frank. Sir John, who meant to return to Rahore next day, wandered forlornly about, taking what comfort he could from Baby's disconsolate little presence, and unable to shake off the feeling that he was guilty of Violet's death.

Frank, perhaps, just then suffered the least. He was completely stunned by the blow.

He sat dreamily on the veranda, or walked vaguely about the garden, where he and she had so often walked, with a stony face and without heeding anybody.

That evening, after sitting opposite him through a dreadful dinner, Sir John was moved to speak to him by the sight of his face.

No one who saw it could doubt that, though he had been untrue to her, he had at least loved the dead girl.

"Frank, what are you going to do?" asked Sir John.

Frank was standing by the French window in the

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

drawing-room, looking vaguely into the night. He turned an apathetic face to Sir John.

"Do?" he said; "I don't know!"

"I—I—understand that in spite of everything you do feel this blow," said Sir John, with an effort.

Frank shook his head.

"I've no right to feeling," he said, in the same listless, toneless voice.

"You can't stay here," said Sir John, after a pause.

"I suppose not."

"And—you can't come back to me at Rahore."

"No," said Frank indifferently.

Sir John hesitated. The change in Frank struck him strongly—Frank, who had always been so eager about even the small things in life. Would it last, he considered bitterly, or would this grief be only a phase in his life, and would he forget it and again be happy?

It was hard to speak to him, to be near him, remembering how he had wronged Violet. But though he had wronged her, her last words and thoughts had been for him. What was there in Frank that two women should give themselves heart and soul to him, clinging to him through his faithlessness? Sir John knew himself to be the worthier man of the two, the most fit for a woman's love; but no one had loved him as these two loved Frank.

Was it all for a handsome face and a charming

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

manner, or was there something better behind that they had reached?

At least, Sir John could no longer tell himself, as he had told himself bitterly during his journey to Kashmir, that Frank had gained his object, and with Violet's money in his possession was, as he wished, free to be happy with another woman.

There was a look on Frank's face that compelled his pity.

"We are going away to-morrow," he said; "Lady Cooke will stay in Murree a few weeks with the children, till it is cool in Rahore. Frank, you will have to rouse yourself and take up your life."

Frank turned strange eyes on him.

"You say that to me?" he said; "do you understand what I have done? Do you understand that I have killed her?"

Sir John had no answer ready; speech between them was difficult; those words seemed to make it impossible.

After he had spoken, Frank waited a moment, then turned away indifferently.

Nothing more was ever said between them. Barbara was not mentioned, no explanation or agreement for silence was made.

Both knew that for Violet's sake, not for Frank's, silence would be kept.

Next morning, Baby, creeping softly through the house after she had been dressed, came upon Frank, sitting by himself on the veranda.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

Baby felt the sorrow in the house, and knew, too, that upon him it had fallen heavily.

She crept up to him, curling herself into a little heap at his side, and began to stroke his hand very, very gently.

He looked up after a moment.

"Is it you, Babs?" he said.

"Haven't you been to bed?" said Baby.

He shook his head.

"And your coat is all wetted!"

Frank felt it in surprise; he had not noticed the rain in the night.

Baby half rose, and slipped something cold and damp into his hand.

"It is mine pear," she said; "I've only eaten half," and she climbed unrepulsed on his knee.

She was not naturally a caressing child, but she understood, as children do, and her arms went round Frank's neck, and her little soft cheek pressed against his.

"Poor Fluffy," she said softly, "poor, poor Fluffy!" And she held the pear to his lips, where her little white teeth had left round marks.

But he sprang to his feet, putting her away almost roughly. Something in the touch of her kind little arms brought back the memory of those that would never hold him again too vividly, and broke through his apathy, bringing a physical pain so acute that he clenched his hands together and set his teeth to bear it.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

He left Baby and went to his room, to face a grief that must be borne alone.

Violet was dead. He would never see her again, never though he lived to be an old man. She was dead, and nothing could bring her back.

Such a short time ago she had been with him, such a short time ago!—it seemed impossible to realize that it was over forever.

She had been able to say so few last words, and she had not even said good-by. But she was dead all the same.

He could not believe that they would ever meet again; she had believed it, and died happy, but he could not believe it—he *could* not.

If there was a God, a God who lived and had any pity, He would make him believe it, when it meant everything to him. But he could not—he knew he had lost Violet forever.

Then came the first intolerable moment of longing for her, longing to feel her soft arms round his neck, to kiss her sweet face.

But he knew he would never feel her touch again, never hear her loving words.

"I cannot bear it!" he said, as many another has said before him.

If he could only see her again—only once more. He had so much to say, there were so many sweet words and kisses to give her still.

Only once more. If there was indeed another life, if Violet indeed understood and heard, surely his

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

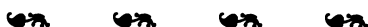
longing would bring her to him, she who was always so ready to come to him.

Surely this hour of heartsick longing was punishment enough for *any* sin!



I'll tak' the red gowd frae my head,  
I'll follow you and beg my bread,  
I'll tak' the red gowd frae my hair,  
And follow you for evermair!

—HYND HORN.



## CHAPTER

### XXII

SIR JOHN and his family started without seeing Frank again. They were a sad little party enough, an uninteresting, unromantic tragedy in themselves. Sir John and Lady Cooke, silent, unfriendly, with the death of two children between them, and Russell, pale, overstrained, unboylike, an anxiety which must separate, instead of bringing them together.

When Frank left his room, he was alone in the house, which seemed very strange and changed in the sudden silence that had fallen on it.

He wandered restlessly through the rooms; they had that deserted, dreary look common to rooms after hasty packing.

An old hat of Baby's and a broken doll lay on the floor in the nursery, the remains of a hasty lunch stood on the dining-room table. Violet's room was empty—barely, utterly empty, as only an Indian

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

room can be. But there were signs of her in the drawing-room—a half-finished bit of fancy work, her garden gloves lying where she had untidily thrown them, two days ago.

Frank turned away restlessly, and then found himself drawn irresistibly back to these things. He touched the gloves where they lay, the hands curled round still with the impress of her fingers; he took up the fancy work, remembering how she had thrown it down petulantly, complaining she could not get it right, and would have to unpick it.

It would never be unpicked now nor finished.

As he stood there, some one softly spoke his name, and he turned.

It did not surprise him much to see Barbara standing by the door. He had hoped she would not come, though he had scarcely thought of her, but after all it mattered very little, nothing mattered much now.

For a time they stood, facing each other in silence. Frank was fighting with an impulse to push her from the room with passionate words of hatred, to drive her at any cost from this house, full of memories of Violet. It was unendurable—an insult, a profanity, that she should be there.

“Well?” he said, drawing his breath sharply, and something in his face kept the distance between them.

Poor Barbara! It was one of the many foolish acts of her life to come to him there so soon.



## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

"Oh, Frank!" she said, with a sob in her voice, "won't you let me comfort you? I have travelled night and day from Murree since I heard."

But she dared not go to him.

"Why did you come here?" said Frank.

"You can ask me that?" said Barbara desperately. "Frank, you are cruel, but I am sorry, sorry for you."

"And yet you killed her," said Frank.

He had been sure from the first that Barbara had betrayed him, and from his words she thought that Sir John had told him the truth.

"Oh, Frank, have mercy!" she cried; "I was half mad with despair. Let me come to you—don't stand there like a stone and keep me away!"

"Let us end this, Barbara," said Frank slowly. "I meant to write to you, but as you have come, perhaps it is just as well. I am—going away—and I must arrange for you first."

"You are going away?" said Barbara. "Frank—you will take me with you?"

His answer meant everything to her. In it was her last desperate hope, a hope growing fainter every minute, since she had seen him.

Her dark eyes searched his face piteously.

"No," said Frank, "I can't take you."

Barbara said nothing; she could not speak.

"Of course I will provide for you."

"Oh, how cruel you are!" said Barbara passionately, "how very, very cruel. What have I done

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

that you should treat me like this—how dare you——!”

“I don’t want to be cruel,” said Frank.

She came to him, clinging to him, refusing to be repulsed, though she felt him shrink from her touch.

“My darling, don’t forsake me!” she said; “Frank, let me go with you—it’s all I ask for. I will be your servant—I will never expect a kind word——”

Her dress brushed against one of Violet’s gloves, and it fell to the ground.

Frank started from her, and picked it up, and stood gently stroking it.

“I can’t do it; I have no love left for any one,” he said.

“I don’t ask for love! I ask for nothing but to be with you! Darling, I am very strong, and nobody will ever be so faithful to you! I will do everything you want, and ask for nothing—only don’t forsake me! don’t forsake me!”

Frank looked at her sadly, trying to bring a kinder tone to his voice. The old love was quite dead, and her presence in Violet’s room, surrounded by memories of her, filled him with repulsion.

“It’s no use,” he said, “I should grow to hate you—there is too much between us.”

Barbara burst out sobbing.

“Have you no love left for me? Has she taken it all?” she said; “I am your wife, and, Frank, you did love me very dearly once! Don’t you think I should

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

be a comfort to you some day? I would try so hard, I would ask for so little!"

"Nobody can ever be a comfort to me," said Frank; "I am sorry to grieve you, Barbara, but don't you see the best thing, the *only* thing for you, now, is to begin a new life—to forget me?"

"Begin a new life—forget?" echoed Barbara bitterly. "How am I to begin a new life? Frank, if you leave me, you leave me to kill myself or do worse! What chance is there for me? You could make me a good woman, and you cast me aside, when you know you are ruining me, body and soul!"

"Barbara, hush. There was some one dead in this house yesterday. Speak quietly."

"The dead are not everything!" said Barbara wildly; "it is easy to die! Do you know what you are doing to me? You are killing every hope and chance of good, you are throwing me aside, knowing I can do nothing but sink! Well, it is nothing to you—you are only murdering my soul, not my body! Go away—go and forget me, and begin a new life!"

She turned from him, and left him standing by the table, gently stroking the little glove.



Yet will the old time  
Never return! Never those peaceful hours!  
Never that careless heart! And never more,  
Ah! never more that laughter without pain.



## CHAPTER XXIII

**F**RANK stood where she had left him for a long time, with bent head and eyes on the ground.

The first real overwhelming sorrow of his life had brought him some comprehension of what Barbara's drawn face and passionate eyes meant.

What had he done? Had he sent her away feeling as he felt, *worse* than he felt, for he knew Violet's love had been his to the last, and if there was another life, was and would be his always.

Did Barbara's heart ache for the touch of his arms, as his did for Violet's?

An hour ago, in his room, he had known what he would do. He had come down, steady in his resolve, to see once more the place where he and Violet had been so happy. He had told himself he could not live without her, he could not face days and years of longing for the girl his selfishness had killed. If there was another life, the God of it must understand that this had been unbearable; if not, better nothingness.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

But now, with a fierce ache at his heart, the doubt came if he had a right to do this thing. He had said to himself passionately that morning that the God who sent such suffering as his could be nothing but a devil; could he himself inflict equal suffering on Barbara? Dare he stand aside and let any human being suffer as she was suffering for his sake?

He had taken Barbara's life into his hands, he had taken her whole love and devotion.

What had Violet said—his little, darling Violet? Only a half-begun sentence:—"If you have a duty to some one else——"

Frank began to walk slowly up and down the room, trying to think steadily.

What must he do?

His old love for Barbara, born of propinquity and passion, was so dead he could scarcely realize it had ever existed; the sight of her, her touch, was repulsive to him; he felt it an insult to Violet to speak to her.

She had come, not leaving him time to bury his dead in peace, thrusting herself into his life with indecent haste.

She could not even wait that they might meet somewhere where everything was not fresh from Violet's touch.

The dead girl was not thirty-six hours in her grave, and yet Barbara could not wait.

Frank clenched his hands till they hurt, with hot anger and disgust.

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

But Barbara was desperate, and he knew it. He knew her passionate nature, her hot, uncontrolled love for him.

She was right. If he cast her aside, it would be her ruin, body and soul. She would be in an impossible position, and though she had borne it so long, when hope was gone she would bear it no longer.

And two women's ruined lives would lie at his door.

Though Violet had been very happy—at least she had been very happy.

What would she have said? What would she have told him to do, had longer time been given to them for good-by?

"It will be your punishment to live," she had said, and he had promised to make his life worthy.

Could he, could any man, face such a punishment as the taking up of this life-long burden?

\* \* \* \* \*

He found her in the garden; she had not gone very far, only to cast herself down, with utter abandonment to her sobbing, under the tree where he and Violet had sat so often.

But at his footstep on the grass she raised her poor, tear-stained face, and looked at him.

"You need not be afraid; I am going away directly," she said faintly, with a little choking breath, left by sobbing, interrupting her words.

"Barbara," said Frank, "I have come to say, if you wish it, I will take you with me."

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

She sprang to her feet; but for the stern, set look on his face she would have thrown her arms round him.

She only stood trembling, with a suddenly transfigured face, and eyes that shone through their tired weeping.

"Frank—do you mean it?" she said breathlessly; "oh, don't say it unless you are sure you mean it!"

"Yes, I mean it," said Frank, "I—I will try and be kind to you—I will do my best."

Suddenly there flashed into Barbara's head a memory of the happy, careless boy who had made love to her in the moonlight of the Red Sea.

He was dead too, and only this stern-faced man filled his place.

And her heart ached for the loss of the boy she had loved.

"Frank," she said gently, "I am so sorry for you. I will not let you regret this. I—I will try not to bother you, and to be always what you wish."

"Then it is settled," said Frank. "Forgive me for all the suffering I have brought you, and let us do our best."

But even as he spoke her very presence hurt him.

"We will go to Australia, or—somewhere," he said, "and once there our—our marriage can be declared. You must have patience with me at first, Barbara, and afterward I will try to be kinder."

"I will be content—with *nothing*——" said Bar-

## The Dishonor of Frank Scott

bara, "as long as I can see you—can have you near me."

But she suddenly caught his hand and kissed it, and Frank, with an impulse, drew it sharply away from her, with a sudden sickening sense of the unbearable of it all.

Could they bear it? Could they live together, with love and hate between them? Could he do this thing for Violet's sake, which still seemed as an insult to her memory?

"Come with me, Barbara," he said gently; "you are worn out—you must rest, and have something to eat."

And Barbara, timidly moving toward him, followed him through that garden of memories.

THE END.

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